

GIUSEPPE BARETTI
AND HIS FRIENDS
—
LACY COELISON-MORLEY

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Emory Walker Ph. sc.

Giuseppe Baretti

From the portrait in the possession of John Murray

GIUSEPPE BARETTI

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF HIS LITERARY
FRIENDSHIPS AND FEUDS IN ITALY
AND IN ENGLAND IN THE DAYS OF
DR. JOHNSON

BY LACY COLLISON-MORLEY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY THE LATE F. MARION CRAWFORD

WITH A PORTRAIT

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TO
MY FATHER'S MEMORY

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P R E F A C E

THE Italian portion of this biography is based, apart from Baretti's own writings, upon the Life by Custodi prefixed to his “*Scritti scelti, inediti o rari di G. Baretti*,” and upon Piccioni's admirable researches, which embody and supplement practically all that is of value in the work of his predecessors. The English portion of Baretti's life I have endeavoured to reconstruct, as far as possible, from the available literature of the period ; and in a biography intended for English readers this portion has naturally been made the most prominent. Baretti's life in England is so closely connected with that of Johnson and his friends that the temptation to go over old ground and re-tell old stories is very strong, and I only hope that I may not be thought to have yielded to it too freely.

My best thanks are due to the Earl of Ilchester for giving me information about Reynolds's portrait

of Baretti, now in his possession, to Signor Caire for supplying me with details concerning Baretti's French translation of Rasselias, and above all to the late Mr. Marion Crawford for his great kindness in reading the proofs and writing me an Introduction when he could ill spare the time from his own work.

L. C-M.

April 1909.

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INTRODUCTION

IT has been the fortune of few men of letters to leave behind them two entirely separate literary reputations, in two different countries, based on works written in two languages.

In Italy every student who follows the ordinary courses of literature is made familiar with the name of Giuseppe Baretti as the destroyer of the silly eighteenth-century Italian “pastorals,” and as the fearlessly sarcastic writer, editor, and proprietor of the periodical *La frusta letteraria*. In England, on the other hand, he is known as the author of delightful books of travel, written in English, of the first good Italian-English Dictionary, and of many minor works; and he is remembered as the friend and constant companion of Johnson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, the Thrales, and Fanny Burney, and of all that wonderful little company which was perhaps never matched in the records of literary life. Johnson loved him, Boswell hated him, Goldsmith hated him and loved him by turns, and Garrick offered to lend him money whenever he wanted it; by

his friends, by his sympathies, by his love of England and English life, he was an Englishman, yet he remained a patriotic Italian at heart to his dying day, and was never naturalised in his adopted country ; his love of Italy took him home more than once, with the idea of ending his busy life there in some calm retreat, pen in hand to the last, for he could not imagine living without writing ; but his love of English institutions and his attachment to his English friends brought him back each time with a fresh conviction that he could work nowhere but in London, and rest nowhere but in a comfortable English country house.

Nevertheless, the Italian of good average education rarely knows that Baretti was ever in England, still less that he wrote much more in English than in his native language, and with a command of our tongue that constantly elicited the admiration of Johnson himself. He spoke it and wrote it so well, indeed, that Englishmen grew to look upon him as one of themselves, and took possession of him, so to say, as they appropriated Handel and other men of genius afterwards, forgetting that each had a country of his own in which he had already won distinction.

This latter phase of Baretti's life will especially interest the English reader who has already met him in the Thrale-Johnson circle and surroundings,

and the glimpses of Italian despotism in the eighteenth century help to explain the persecuted literary man's boundless enthusiasm for English liberty. In the last half-century of its existence the Venetian Government was the most perfectly organised machine for spying upon friends and enemies that was ever perfected by human ingenuity; its arm was long and its hand crept after Baretti wherever he went, ready to seize him instantly if he should unwarily enter the dominions of the Republic. The history of the *Frusta letteraria* was in itself a romance, in the course of which the daring assailant of the "pastorals" and the "antiquaries" was pursued by the censorship and driven from town to town and from one press to another in the course of publishing successive numbers of his little review, till he at last gave it up in disgust. Then, too, there are incidents of another sort, but equally characteristic of Italian life in the eighteenth century, pages that show Baretti expending his best energies to win the favour of princes, and to obtain one of those well-paid posts of idleness with which men of letters used to be rewarded all over the continent. But he laboured in vain. After sowing the best of his wit, he reaped nothing but disappointment, and in the end it was England that granted the Italian writer the well-earned pension which greatly lightened the labours of his last years, and it was

in an English church that English friends erected a monument to his memory.

Finally, an Englishman has at last given us a worthy account of Giuseppe Baretti, and has brought to the compilation of the present biography certain advantages which the subject of it would have been the first to appreciate—I mean a thorough knowledge of the Italian language, not extracted from books only, but obtained during a long residence in Italy, combined with that necessary understanding of the Italian character which only such personal experience can give, and without which it is not easy for an Anglo-Saxon to treat a Latin with true fairness.

F. MARION CRAWFORD.

February 1909.

BARETTI AND HIS TIMES

CHAPTER 1

EARLY YEARS

1719—1735

BARETTI is a common name in Piedmont to this day, and in the eighteenth century seems to have been even more common than it is at present. The particular branch of the family in which we are interested came from the little town of Rivalta in the Alto Monferrato. According to local tradition, the terrible plague that ravaged the district in the sixteenth century left only twelve families surviving. Drastic measures had to be taken to restore society in the neighbourhood, and six of these families, including the Baretti, were ennobled, while the other six remained simply plebeian. There appears to be no ground whatever for this popular belief, as the most careful research has not brought to light any proof of nobility among the Baretti; but it shows that they were a prominent family in the neighbourhood. To this day the “Ca’ di Barett”

(Casa di Baretti) and the “Cort’ di Barett’” (Corte di Baretti), from which there is a beautiful view over the valley of the Bormida and the fertile hills of Monferrato, are pointed out beyond Rivalta, and the house must once have been one of the best in the neighbourhood.¹

Baretti himself seems to have believed the story of the nobility of his family, for in 1766 we find him trying to procure a copy of the patent of nobility supposed to have been obtained by a Marcantonio Baretti in 1533, as it might serve him some day as a proof that his origin was something above the common.

The industry of modern scholars has collected considerable information concerning the remoter history of Baretti’s ancestors; but for our purposes it seems hardly necessary to go farther back than his grandfather, Marcantonio Baretti, who was a physician, born in 1656. At that period in Italy a doctor did not set up for himself in a town and wait for patients, unless he was a man of considerable importance. Every municipality and district had its own medical officer—the “medico condotto”—at a fixed salary. When a student had taken his degree, he was apprenticed to another doctor to learn the practical part of his

¹ Piccioni, “Studi e ricerche intorno a G. Baretti,” p. 28. This with the same author’s “Giuseppe Baretti, I primi anni,” have been my chief authorities for this chapter.

profession, and then applied for any such post or “condotta” that might be vacant. “When the place is once obtained, the young physician keeps it until he hears of a better, and then he offers himself a candidate for that. By these means our provincial physicians shift from place to place—that is, from a small ‘condotta’ to a greater.”¹ Influence, of course, counted for much in these appointments, and many men never obtained a “condotta” at all; but this was the regular career for a doctor. Hence we are not surprised to find Marcantonio leading rather a wandering life at first in the exercise of his profession.

It is usually stated by Baretti’s biographers that his grandfather married into the noble family of the Marchesi del Carretto. He himself was fond of boasting of his noble ancestry, and used the name “Del Carretto” as a pseudonym when he wished to conceal his own on several occasions; but his father was a vain man, and probably devoted far more attention to teaching his children to boast of their illustrious birth than to training them to earn their living. Some allowance must, however, be made for the times, when influence and high connections were all-important for success in life, and when it was eminently true that an aspirant after honours “knows enough who knows a duke.” The most shadowy claims to nobility

¹ Baretti, “Manners and Customs of Italy,” i. 216.

then had their value. But the light of research has ruthlessly dispelled even these pretensions. The name of Baretti's grandmother was almost certainly Diana Maria Arcasio, though there is some slight evidence to show that she may have been distantly connected with a younger branch of the Del Carretto family, or was conceivably an illegitimate daughter of some member of the house. The marriage of a man of Marcantonio Baretti's position into such a family at that period would have been, to all intents and purposes, a social impossibility.

The marriage took place at Bistagno, whence Marcantonio shortly afterwards migrated to Mombercelli, where Luca, father of Giuseppe, the subject of this biography, appears to have been born on October 17, 1688. In 1692 he once more returned to his native town of Rivalta, where he remained till his death in 1704. Here he seems to have prospered, for we find him Sindaco (or Mayor) of the place in 1696, his brother being Alfiere (or Captain) there about the same time; so that there is no truth in Baretti's statement in a letter¹ that his father "was born in a wretchedly poor village in Monferrato of wretchedly poor parents."

Baretti's father, Luca, is said to have been trained originally as an engineer, or even a

¹ To Dr. Vincenzo Malacarne, London, June 27, 1781.

surveyor, only adopting the more high-sounding title in later life ; but his son denies this, maintaining that he studied architecture in Turin under the famous Abate Filippo Juvara, a Sicilian of eminence in that period of bad taste, who ended his days in Madrid in the service of the Spanish court. The first post held by Luca was that of Treasurer (Economo) to the Royal University at Turin. Apparently he did not rise to eminence as an architect, though he must have possessed some means, for in 1716 he was able to marry Anna Caterina Tesio, the daughter of a peasant, who brought with her a dowry of only 200 lire. His wife's humble origin would be especially calculated to make a shallow man like Luca boast of his own imaginary illustrious descent.

Of this union four sons survived, though six children were born—Marcantonio Giuseppe, with whom we are now concerned, Filippo, Giovanni Battista, and Amadeo, the three brothers to whom so many of Giuseppe's letters are addressed. The two elder of these had no settled occupation ; but Amadeo followed his father's profession, and was in charge of the fortifications of Casale from 1766-72. He was then appointed King's Architect for the district beyond the Po, and thus held a very good position.

When we come to deal with Giuseppe's early life, we have very few first-hand documents to

go upon. Some years later Count Giammaria Mazzuchelli, who was preparing his collection of Italian authors, applied to Carl' Antonio Tanzi for biographical information concerning Baretti. Tanzi asked his old friend to send him the necessary details, and received a most characteristic letter in reply, dated from Turin, April 26, 1749. We see at once that Baretti is flattered at the request, though he banterers his friend a good deal for making it.

Mad king of all the madmen ! You have put me in a pretty position, my dear Tanzi ! I always knew that you were my match, if not more than my match, for wild schemes, but this is past belief ; I yield you the palm and say with Tasso, “ Friend, thou hast conquered, and I pardon thee.”¹ Yes, you really have conquered this time, and are madder than I am. I to write my life ! And why, pray ? To have it printed among the lives of great men ! I fall down before my Most Illustrious Worship ! O Phoebus, O ye Muses, O Bacchus, O Agathyrsis ! Would ye hear the maddest thing in all the world ? However, you have driven me into a corner : you tell me you have really promised it to the Count, so there is no help for me. I must go raving mad myself and write it and send it. . . .

What on earth am I to say in this life ? That

¹ “Amico, hai vinto, io ti perdono.” This is the beginning of Clorinda’s famous farewell to her lover, Tancredi, by whom she had been mortally wounded, unrecognised, in single combat (“Ger. lib.,” canto xi.).

my ancestors were noble? . . . That I was born in '16? A great and important piece of news, this! . . . That I ran away from home as a boy; that I have played the fool in a thousand ways all over the world; that I have been in love several times; that all the susceptible ladies are dying for me; that I know a number of poets and madmen? I'm sure I don't know what on earth to tell you. . . . Any number of things I cannot tell you in this life—and those the interesting ones, too; the rest is dull enough. However, if you will grant me three or four months' grace, I will write it for you in all seriousness; but I shall have to make endless inquiries and be very careful, for a man's reputation depends entirely on a work of this kind, and I have not much at best, nor should I like to lose the little I have. . . . In three or four months at the outside you shall have the life of your friend Baretti.

Unfortunately, Baretti never carried out his intention, and Mazzuchelli had to be satisfied with the information he could pick up in Turin from Baretti's friends, but he printed the above letter in full in his "Scrittori d'Italia."¹

Baretti's own inaccuracy has given rise to not a few of the mistakes usually made about him. He was naturally excitable, enthusiastic, and impatient of detail, always in extremes. We frequently find him making a statement in one context which he flatly contradicts in another.

¹ Brescia, 1753-62.

He is not even consistent about the date of his own birth. In the above letter and in several others he distinctly gives it as 1716; yet in the vast majority of his letters he says he was born in 1719, and this is undoubtedly correct, for Signor Piccioni has found a certificate of baptism of a Marcantonio Giuseppe Baretta—an easy mistake for Baretti—dated April 24, 1719, which almost certainly refers to Baretti. It would seem that in early life Baretti deliberately gave himself out to be three years older than he really was, in order to add to his own dignity; and afterwards he sometimes gave one date, sometimes another.¹ He himself would have been utterly indifferent about such a point, which is not in itself of much importance except as an indication of character, and would be the first to charge us with pedantry for raising it.

The boy's character must have developed early. He was headstrong and passionate, but able, quick, and clear-headed; and his natural violence was counter-balanced by a warm heart. His taste for literature soon showed itself. He tells us that when a boy, he took such delight in reading stories and poems that he filled his head with a whole library of them.²

His father at first intended him to become a

¹ Piccioni, "Studi," pp. 70 ff.

² *Frusta letteraria*, ii.

priest, in the hope of obtaining for him a benefice which had been endowed by one of his ancestors, and he was made to don the habit of a little abbé when quite a boy, according to the custom of those days. But it was soon obvious that he had no vocation, and it was thought that his abilities might fit him for his father's profession of architect. This plan was frustrated by the boy's defective sight, which compelled him to wear the strongest glasses from his earliest years. Again the plans were changed, and he was to become a lawyer; but it is noticeable that there is not the least hint that his father ever consulted his son in any way about his future.

Latin was essential for the law, and he was sent to school, but complains that his teacher's pedantic methods made the language odious to him, and his progress was but slight. "Instead of explaining 'capiro,' or 'fastidio,' or Cicero, or Virgil, or Ovid, he used to cane me."¹ This may be true, but Baretti was not naturally a scholar, and it is doubtful whether he could ever have learnt Latin as thoroughly as he afterwards did modern languages, unless he had learnt it as a living language.

Disgusted with his work, he threw himself heart and soul into general literature and read

¹ "Piacévoli poesie," al Conte Zampieri da Imola.

widely, but not wisely, as he himself admits.¹ He became an enthusiast for all the affectations of the “seicentisti,” or seventeenth-century writers, and tells us that his favourite poets were “Loredano, Lupis, and Marino.” The last was the founder of this school, while the other two are minor writers of little importance. His teacher does not seem to have recognised the boy’s literary talent or to have tried to train his taste, and his own, if he had any, may well have been no better than that of his pupil. His father was the last man to undertake the task. Baretti truly calls him a “poor friend to Apollo” in another poem.

At this time Tagliazzucchi’s school was flourishing in Turin. Baretti says he was “a great mathematician and Professor of the Greek and Tuscan Languages in the University of Turin, . . . of whom I had the good fortune to be for many years a pupil.”² To his school, then, Giuseppe betook himself, determined to learn Greek. His father was indignant. Greek was not necessary for a lawyer. Had not the Marchese d’Ormea become Prime Minister to Vittorio Amedeo without knowing a word of Greek? “More than once he snatched the grammar out of my hand and boxed my ears

¹ To Count Zampieri, as above.

² “A Dissertation upon the Italian Poetry,” p. 60.

with it, . . . thus doing me a wrong which I have never since been able to repair.”¹

Education was then at a low ebb in Piedmont. Latin was badly taught, Greek was hardly taught at all, and Italian was neglected for French. Intelligence and ability were not the high-roads to success, as Baretti was to find to his cost; and a narrow, practical man like his father had more justification for undervaluing the advantages of a good education than he would have had in less stagnant times.

The boy cannot have been happy at home. With his father he had little sympathy, while we know absolutely nothing of his mother. She probably had very little say in matters of importance. Her husband was not the man to ask her advice, and her humble origin must have unfitted her for interesting herself in her son’s education. One cannot help feeling that the rough, overbearing manner which characterised her son at all times, even towards ladies, was largely due to the peasant blood that was in his veins; and to his mother he may also have owed the sound common sense and the pertinacity which he afterwards displayed. We have nothing to show that her death, on May 19, 1735, when he was sixteen years old, made any deep impression on the boy.

¹ Letter to his nephew, Pino Baretti, London, January 25, 1775.

He must by now have insisted on having a voice in the question of his own future, for he tells us he was determined not to swell the ranks of the “worthless rascals distinguished by the sounding title of advocate.”

But an event soon occurred at home which proved the turning-point in his whole life. His mother had hardly been dead a month when his father married again. It is altogether a mistake to suppose that his second wife was an actress.¹ Her name was Genoveffa Astrua. Her father and one of her brothers were well-to-do men, while another brother was a priest in the service of the Nuncio and the Archbishop of Turin. About this time a famous actress named Astrea was having a great success in Piedmont, and the mistake is due to the similarity of names. But the wife was many years younger than her husband, and, moreover, she brought with her an admirer, Miglyna di Capriglio, who was Luca Baretti’s official chief. This seems to have disgusted young Giuseppe.

It is true that in the eighteenth century it was usual for a married lady of any position to be attended by her “cicisbeo,” “a cant term which originally signified no more than a whisperer.”²

¹ The article in “The Dictionary of National Biography,” which does not appear to have been revised in accordance with recent research, still makes this statement.

² Baretti’s “Manners and Customs,” i. 101.

These gentlemen were selected with the greatest care, “and in all outward appearance attend on ladies with as much attention and respect as if they were lovers.” Baretti ascribes their origin to Platonic love, the worship of ideal beauty in an earthly form, and to the gallantry towards the fair sex habitual to Latins—the hand-kissing and similar customs, which are so little understood in England. Their position was a recognised one, and there was nothing tactless in asking a lady how her “cicisbeo” did. The husband was generally consulted about the choice of a “cavaliere servente,” and as a rule they were neither young nor good-looking. In Venice there was a story told of a lady retiring into a convent because her husband did not approve of her choice. They were often a serious inconvenience in a family, especially as it was unusual for a husband and wife ever to appear together in public; and there is an amusing play by Goldoni describing the artifices resorted to by a young couple to get rid of the “cicisbeo” and escape to the country, where they could be together in peace.

Capriglio’s attentions must therefore have been unusually pressing to arouse Baretti’s indignation, quick-tempered though he was; and the fact that his stepmother afterwards married her admirer shows that he had good grounds for his suspicions. A violent quarrel ensued, and Baretti is even said

to have challenged his enemy ; but his father supported his wife, with the result that his eldest son determined to leave home for good.

Ugo Foscolo suggests that Baretti was really in love with his stepmother. There is nothing in his later life, when he was almost austere in his conduct, to justify such suspicions ; but he was only sixteen at this time, and was always susceptible. In all probability he felt that the time had come to change his surroundings, with which he must now have grown more than ever discontented. He himself tells us that a youthful desire to see the world had much to do with his leaving home, as we can well believe ; and he adds that, like Bias of old, he set out, taking nothing with him but himself.¹

¹ “Stanze al Padre Scrafino Bianchi,” ad finem.

CHAPTER II

GUASTALLA, VENICE, MILAN, AND CUNEO

1735—1745

GIUSEPPE had an uncle, his father's younger brother, who held some secretarial post at the Court of Linora, Duchess of Guastalla, a tiny little independent duchy not far south of Mantua. It is usually said that he was Secretary of State there; but no record can be found of his name in the Court archives, and the statement is probably the result of his nephew's habitual exaggeration. Thither, then, the boy went on leaving his father's home, and was warmly welcomed by his uncle—a fact which shows that he at least considered that Giuseppe's conduct towards his stepmother had been amply justified. Work was soon found for him in the offices of the Sanguinetti, rich merchants of the town; and he had his first experience of life in what must have been far from congenial surroundings. But fortune favoured him in one respect. Carlo Cantoni, a cultivated man of letters, who had written a number of poems, was employed in the same

16 GUASTALLA, VENICE, MILAN, CUNEO
office, and the following story is told of their
early relations :

Cantoni wished to dictate the business letters to Baretti ; but the latter, not knowing who Cantoni was, indignantly refused, saying he could perfectly write them himself. Out of regard for Baretti's youth, the old man said nothing. Some time later it happened that there was not much work to be done, so Cantoni produced a volume of his own verses and gave them to the young men in the office to read. Baretti read them and praised them warmly, without knowing the author's name. When Cantoni, out of modesty, remarked that they were quite worthless, Baretti told him that they were very good verses, and that people who knew nothing about poetry should hold their tongues. The joke was kept up a little longer ; but when at last Baretti was convinced that they were really written by Cantoni, he said, " Signor Cantoni, I ask your pardon for having thought you a man of no parts for so long. Will you please dictate the letters to me in future ? " From that day he refused to write them alone.¹

The story brings the boy's generous nature clearly before us, and makes it easy to understand the affection felt for him by his real friends, in spite of his faults.

The friendship that now sprang up between Baretti and Cantoni was of the utmost importance in forming the younger man's taste and character.

¹ Letter from Tanzi to Count Mazzucchelli.

From Cantoni he learnt to appreciate the beauties of good Italian and to admire the best writers of his country. Loredano, Lupis, and Marino disappeared ; and we learn that one day Cantoni took Marino out of his hands and gave him Berni in its place. Berni, with his “*Orlando Amoroso*” and his shorter pieces, was the founder of Italian burlesque poetry ; and while he amused his countrymen from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, or even later, he served them as an admirable model. Practically all Baretti’s verse is written in the light, easy, familiar style of his new master. Many years later, in his review, the *Frusta letteraria*,¹ he gave an admirable criticism of Berni, based on Dr. Johnson’s definition of wit—I translate from Baretti—as a “faculty of the mind that brings together unexpectedly ideas that are simple, but dissimilar and altogether distinct, and combines and welds them so completely into one whole as to form a perfectly natural compound idea” ; and he proves that this is the foundation of Berni’s method. Cantoni could not have made a more fortunate choice.

Baretti had at last found a guide to his studies such as he had long needed—a guide who might have made his early life very different had he met him sooner. On Cantoni’s death he wrote, “The world has never had many men like him,

¹ *Opere di G. Baretti scritte in lingua italiana*, 1813, i. 275.

18 GUASTALLA, VENICE, MILAN, CUNEO
for such kindness of heart and such knowledge are
very rarely found united in the same person.”¹

Baretti remained two years at Guastalla, where, thanks to Cantoni’s introduction, he made the acquaintance of Dr. Vittore Vettori, of Mantua, a capable versifier with whom he afterwards corresponded for many years. He must certainly have visited Mantua while in the neighbourhood. During this period he began to write verses himself under his friend’s guidance. These early exercises at least taught him to use his own language correctly, and they had real educational value. Gradually, however, he grew dissatisfied with Guastalla and his work there. He must have realised by now that he had talents above the average, by means of which he hoped to make his way in life. He was young, full of curiosity, and eager to see the world, and his thoughts naturally turned towards Venice. He left Guastalla for Venice when he was little more than eighteen, probably with introductions to men of letters in that town from the friends he was leaving.

Besides being absolutely unique in its way, Venice was at that time one of the gayest cities in Europe, if not the gayest. It corresponded to what Paris is now, or was at the time of the Second Empire. All the energies of the Vene-

¹ “Select Letters,” London, ii. 81.

tians, which could no longer find an outlet in great commercial enterprises, were now directed to the pursuit of pleasure in every form. Beckford noticed the restlessness of the nobles, and the variety of amusements that seemed absolutely necessary to their existence. The carnivals grew more wonderful every year, and attracted vast crowds from all over Italy and even Europe, while the gay ladies of Venice were countless and everywhere notorious. “Grace, charm, life, coquetry,” says Molmenti,¹ “idleness and gallantry—we see it all in Longhi’s pictures”; but there is no intellectual depth, all is on the surface. “The ladies are beautiful with a beauty now lost, but we see from their faces that they never gave the morrow a thought—living in indolent ease, flirts in head, heart, and taste.” Frivolity reigned everywhere supreme, even in the local academy, combined with a craving for novelty. In 1750, for instance, a rhinoceros was exhibited for the first time in Venice, and the whole town went mad about it. A medal was actually struck in its honour, and its portrait was painted by Longhi. The only serious occupation, the ruling passion with every one, was gambling. At the ridotto the nobles alone appeared unmasked, and a noble always presided at the tables,

¹ “Società Veneziana nel settecento,” in “Studi e ricerche di storia e d’arte.”

20 GUASTALLA, VENICE, MILAN, CUNEO
ready to take the bank against all comers, noble or otherwise. This side of the life, though it may have amused and interested, cannot have had much real attraction for Baretti ; but it must have tempted him occasionally, for he once owned in London that he had gambled away his little patrimony at faro. Venice had another side, however, and a very attractive side, which is brought before us in Goldoni's plays—the life of the ordinary family of the time, which was simple and unaffected by all this frivolity, except during carnival ; and there was the literary life of the day, centring round the booksellers' shops and the coffee-houses, both of which offered genuine attractions to a man like Baretti.

In Venice Baretti made the acquaintance of Count Gaspare Gozzi, the elder of the two brothers who were then the chief literary lights of their native town. Nothing more perfectly charming can well be imagined than the account of the life led by this gifted family in their half-ruined palace given in Carlo Gozzi's "Memoirs," with their pathetic title.¹ Their mother had been one of the great Tiepolo family, and her love of display soon brought the household into difficulties. Then Count Gaspare had married Luisa Bergalli, a beautiful girl of great ability, ten years

¹ "Memorie inutili della vita di C. G., scritte da lui medesimo e pubblicate per umiltà."

older than himself. Her father owned a cobbler's shop; but she had been taught drawing by Rosalba and Latin by Apostolo Zeno, and the house soon became a great centre for men of letters. She was, however, a bad manager, and extravagant, and the family affairs became more and more involved. His portrait shows that Gaspare was a weak, rather shiftless man, ill-fitted to face the difficulties in his path or to oppose his strong-minded wife with success. In despair, he retired among his books, and tried to find consolation in work. Every one in the tumble-down, draughty palace wrote verses and worked for the booksellers. Fleury, for instance, they translated alternately, drawing lots for the order in which they should take up the work. No one has described the sufferings of a man of ability driven to hack-work by want better than Gozzi:

A thousand shifts I tried, but all in vain. . . .
I had to pledge my brain and let it out for hire
to the grasping booksellers, daily giving them
their portion. Just as an old woman slowly spins
the flax, thread by thread, from the distaff, that
Saturday may bring payment for all her late toil,
so must I spin out my brain, fibre by fibre, down
to its lowest cells, toiling in drudgery and misery
at dull work that brings no glory and is death to
a man and to his good name.¹

Yet this appeal was fruitless. But Count

¹ "Sermone a S. E. Marco Foscarini."

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Gaspare was also the author of the *Osservatore Veneto*, an admirable imitation of the *Spectator* in Italian and one of the first attempts at a regular newspaper in the country, as well as of a defence of Dante against the absurd attacks of the Jesuit Bettinelli which has won him lasting fame.

His brother Carlo was dreamy, fanciful, and humorous, yet aggressive, and a sworn enemy of Goldoni; but he does not seem to have been attracted by the rough Piedmontese, though Baretti made it a point of honour to pit him against Goldoni and support him warmly in and out of season, after his wont. He tells us how one day Carlo Gozzi informed Goldini, then at the height of his fame, during a quarrel in a coffee-house, that he would draw all Venice to see the old fairy-tale of the “Three Oranges,” and kept his word so well in his revival of the old Venetian tales in conjunction with the *Commedia dell’ Arte*, the mask-comedy of pantaloon and harlequin, that Goldoni quitted his native city in disgust.¹

On this, his first visit to Venice, Baretti barely became acquainted with Gaspare Gozzi.

I know him by sight, and was with him in Venice, but at that time I was not the important person I am now. I spent a few hours and a

¹ “Manners and Customs,” i. 184.

few evenings in his company, but then Berni was not my favourite author, nor had I learnt his manner.¹

He did not stay long in Venice, and then, either because he was restless or because he failed to make his way there, he wandered to Milan, where he was first to make his mark ; and to Milan we will follow him.

We must now give some account of the academies that had sprung up in all the chief towns of Italy for the encouragement of literature. It is true that in later life no one was more contemptuous of these institutions than the future “Aristarco” ; but in his youth he thoroughly entered into their spirit and derived considerable benefit from them.

In the year 1690 a band of poets was wandering in the Prati, the fields round the Castle of St. Angelo in Rome—now, alas ! rapidly ceasing to be fields in anything but name—reciting verses and enjoying the glorious sunshine, when one of them exclaimed, “It seems as if Arcadia were reviving among us to-day.” The words were taken up, a society was formed under the patronage of Don Livio Odescalchi, called the Arcadian Academy, all the members of which assumed pastoral names. Thus the president, Crescimbeni, the “Guardian

¹ “Piacevoli poesie,” to Vittore Vettori, of Mantua.

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of Arcadia" (Custode d' Arcadia), was called
Alfesibeo Cario (Alphesibœus of Caria).

It is impossible to conceive [writes Baretti in his "Manners and Customs of Italy"¹] the eagerness with which this whimsical scheme of turning all sorts of men into imaginary shepherds was adopted, both in Rome and out of Rome; and how the inflammable imaginations of my countrymen were fired by it! . . . Even cardinals did not disdain to be listed in the catalogue of these Arcadian swains.

The average man rather liked to be called Sylvanus or Thyrsis for a change, and his lady-love *Ægle*.

None of our *cicisbeos* dared now peep out of his hut, but with a hook in one hand and a flute in the other.

He tells us that no less than fifty-eight "colonies" sprang up all over Italy in connection with the main body in Rome, the head-quarters of which were originally called the *Serbatoio*. Baretti defines the word in the first paper of his *Frusta*, in which he pours forth all the vials of his contempt upon the heads of the unfortunate Arcadians, as "a Greek word, originally derived from the Chaldaean, which in Rome means a Poetical Secretary's office; in Florence a room for keeping

¹ Chap. xv.

birds, raw or cooked, and other eatables.” The definition has a ring of Johnson about it, and would have looked well in the Italian Dictionary.

This craze for academies had various results. In the first place, there was a vast increase in the output of verse throughout the country, much of which was no doubt worthless; but literature was thereby popularised to a considerable extent. Then the best in the land wished to be thought men of taste and letters, and were eager to belong to the academies, where the literary men mixed with them on an equal footing, with the result that their social position was raised and that they became more independent. Literature now held a position such as it had never held before. Lastly, the Arcadians professed to make it their object to restore good taste and banish the affectations introduced into literature by Marini and his followers; and it must be admitted that the Arcadians were not unsuccessful in their objects. The meetings where verses were read kept alive a real literary interest and gave these shepherd abbés and lawyers in wigs and patches an opportunity for inflicting their second-rate verses on each other. It is true that a pastoral existence “cannot be drawn from any system of life that was ever lived by any people”; that it was quite absurd and that Arcadia soon degenerated into a “school

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of futility and flattery," as Baretti says; but when he attacked it, its best days were over. It had served its purpose and was justly falling into contempt as a check upon progress.

The spirit that produced *Arcadia* was characteristic of the eighteenth century. In England Lady Miller had her famous *Frascati* vase in her drawing-room at Batheaston, near Bath, into which aspiring poets dropped their effusions on stated occasions. A committee sat upon them and awarded prizes to the best. Men like Horace Walpole laughed at it all, but the witlings of the period revelled in it, for it gave them an object in writing; and, moreover, Lady Miller knew how to keep her meetings select and to make admission to her circle eagerly sought after.

The next three years, spent by Baretti in Milan, were some of the happiest in his life. He was then going through the period of transition from boyhood to manhood, when impressions are most vivid and when the final bent is generally given to a man's character, whether for good or for evil. He was young, but in Italy maturity comes early and he was fully capable of holding his own in the world. In Milan, too, he had the three most important experiences that can well befall a young man. He achieved his first literary success, made really good friends who

could appreciate as well as advise him, and mixed for the first time freely in female society, with the natural result that he fell in love. Is it to be wondered at that his poetical letters to friends in the town in after-years have a more affectionate tone than those to any others, and that his home-sickness for Milan has a genuine ring?

We have no means of knowing whether Baretti brought introductions with him or not; but apparently it was mere chance that threw him in the way of Dr. Giammaria Bicetti, who at once conceived a great liking for him and even took him into his own family and household. Bicetti was a well-known figure in Milan—"a man full of wit," Baretti calls him—to whom Parini afterwards dedicated his poem upon *Inoculation*. He quickly introduced Baretti to his brother-in-law, Count Giuseppe Maria Imbonati, with the result that he began to frequent the literary gatherings at the Count's house, which afterwards developed into the Academy of the *Trasformati*, and Baretti seems to have become a member of this academy about 1743, or soon after its foundation.

At that time the most eminent figure in the circle was the genial Passeroni, "the weirdest of men,"¹ as Baretti calls him, who was then engaged upon his extraordinary poem on *Cicero*, full of

¹ "Un singolare fra i più singolari."

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endless amusing digressions, which he himself says will be the longest poem in the world. Sterne visited him in Milan and recognised him as his master, since “Tristram Shandy” is also built up of long digressions. Sterne was amazed at his poverty. He found him in a little room, partitioned off with wood, his sole companion being the famous cock, whose praises fill no less than two thousand verses in his poems—a typically Italian picture. Passeroni placed independence above everything, never accepting a present, and was clearly a man after Baretti’s own heart.

He it was who introduced to the *Trasformati* the famous Giuseppe Parini, soon to become the greatest of all the members of the academy. At this time he was quite a boy, but Baretti became acquainted with him later. Parini was to realise once and for all that a poet must have something to say, if he is to succeed, and that sugared sonnets without meaning had had their day. Modern Italian literature is usually considered to take its start from him. He had been a tutor in the families of the great, and used the knowledge he had gained there in his best poem, the “Giorno,” or description of a day in the life of a young man of fashion of the period, full of the keenest satire. Baretti wishes to rank him with Pope or Boileau; and though the distance between them is consider-

able, his “Giorno” stands high in this class of poetry.

These two men did more than any one else to drive the bleating sheep and the crooks and pipes once and for all out of Italy. At this time there were a number of capable versifiers in Milan with whom Baretti afterwards corresponded—Tanzi, Carcano (who was to be the last secretary of the *Trasformati*), Fuentes, and Balestrieri (who made a once famous collection of poems on the death of his pet cat, contributed from all over Italy). For Balestrieri Baretti had the greatest admiration. He places his poem “Tasso”¹ above Pope’s “Homer,” and contrasts the generous way in which this was subscribed for in England with the treatment Balestrieri will receive in Italy. He bids Carcano give him two hearty kisses, and thank him for having written the one modern poem that has given him unalloyed pleasure. This is obviously exaggerated praise, but characteristic of Baretti, who never did things by halves. From a later letter to Francesco Carcano (March 12, 1784) we gather that he at last wearied of this writing in the style of the *improvvisatori*, which then bored him to death.

Baretti must have added much to the life of the society.

Into this gay, cultured band at Milan [says

¹ Letter to Francesco Carcano, London, August 31, 1780.

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Carducci¹], Giuseppe Baretti, a man of independent character, strong and honest, with a warm heart made for friendship, in spite of his rough, almost savage manner, had stumbled in 1740 from Turin. Imagine the noise he must have made at twenty-one!

Many of the gatherings were held at Balestrieri's house, and Baretti gives us a genial account² of them.

We shall play at Ombre at Balestrieri's, and there will be good music in the same room. If Tanzi has not changed, he will set us laughing with his jokes and stories. Verses we shall make of all sorts, and every one will pick them to pieces; and when we can find nothing better to do, we shall play the scholar.

He goes on to pray God to shower blessings on Milan—to bless every house, every square, every street, and always to keep her amused at somebody else's expense.

In another poem³ he gives us a glimpse of his life in Milan, after a stay of eighteen months. He tells us he often lies in bed till mid-day, and then goes out and amuses himself with his friends, frequently not returning till the fourth hour after sunset.⁴ Then he sits down at his desk to work.

¹ "L'Accademia dei Trasformati e Giuseppe Parini" in "Studi su Giuseppe Parini."

² "Piacevoli poesie," to Fuentes.

³ As above, to Count Camillo Zampieri da Imola.

⁴ Till within living memory the Italians reckoned time from

“Now,” he proceeds, “I am learning Latin. I can hardly understand it,” thanks to the pedant of whom he has already told us. “But at last I am in luck’s way, for, though rather late in the day, I have found some one to put me on the right road.” Thus at last he learnt one of the “two keys of human knowledge,”¹ as he calls the dead languages, though “nature has given me a thick, thick, thick head.” He put his Latin to some use by translating Ovid’s “Amores” and “Remedia Amoris” into blank verse. “Some elegies of Ovid are now being printed in Milan, which I translated in the happy times when I saw you every day.”² These were the first complete Italian translations of these works of Ovid, but they were not published till some years later. Signor Piccioni³ has carefully collated the translations with the original and found numerous blunders in the interpretation of the Latin.⁴ Moreover, not only is the Italian far longer than the original, which is intelligible in a translation, but it contains a number of imported beauties of Baretta’s invention, not to be found in Ovid. Baretta was too impetuous to make an exact scholar, and regarded

sunrise to sunset, and thus the different hours varied considerably in the course of the year.

¹ Letter to his brother Filippo, December 26, 1769.

² Letter to Bicetti, Turin, 1750.

³ “Studi e ricerche,” pp. 96-7.

⁴ E.g. “Subiti mala semina morbi” (“Rem. Am.” 76) is rendered “Velenosi semi del domabile mal.”

detailed criticism as pedantry, though, like all people of his temperament, he was ready enough to use his own store of knowledge to ridicule other people's blunders.

But study did not take up all Baretti's working hours. He was rapidly gaining a reputation for occasional verse in Berni's manner among his contemporaries. Most of his poems have little real value, but he was in great request for the celebration of births, deaths, and marriages, and the taking of the veil by young ladies of good family, which was solemnised like a wedding. Most unmarried girls at that time took the veil sooner or later, for convent life was far from strict, especially in Venice, and ladies of good family had many privileges. At these ceremonies verses were quite as indispensable as good food and wine for the guests, thanks to the example set by Arcadia in Rome; and even now the custom has not quite died out in Italy. A large proportion of the fugitive verse of the eighteenth century was thus written to order, and elaborate volumes were published on great occasions. We may also feel sure that Baretti was not backward in contributing verses for the literary gatherings of his friends. These years must have slipped by very pleasantly for him.

Baretti was always fond of female society, which he found, on the whole, more amusing than that

of men, and he makes us some interesting confidences in his letters.¹ After careful consideration, he tells us he finds that what a woman really likes best is to be cleverly and delicately complimented on some virtue or quality she possesses rather than on her looks. A beautiful woman who is also charitable would therefore rather be complimented on her charity than on her beauty. He always studied the art of making himself agreeable to the ladies, but I am afraid his overbearing ways often spoiled his efforts. On one occasion he provoked a beautiful and lively American lady, Mrs. Paradise, so much that she turned the boiling water of her tea-urn over him.² This Mrs. Paradise never wasted words. She was a woman of action, and as bad-tempered as Baretti. At a dancing-class once she quietly got up, called her daughter to her, gave her a box on the ear that made her reel for doing something of which she disapproved, returned to her place and continued her conversation absolutely unmoved. As she grew older, however, her peevishness showed itself clearly in her expression. Baretti honestly admits that "before leaving Italy I managed to fall desperately in love more than once." One so impulsive would not fall in love by halves, and if his passions were short, they would certainly be sharp.

¹ "Lettere familiari," xv.

² Miss Hawkins's "Memoirs," p. 71.

When he had been about three years in Milan, he seems to have returned to his native Piedmont. His letters show that he was in Cuneo in 1742; and in the following year he revisited Milan, where he was warmly welcomed, staying with Count Imbonati.¹ He was then appointed Keeper of the Stores (Custode dei Magazzini) to the fortifications which were being built at Cuneo. The post was neither very important nor very lucrative, but it was the only one which Baretti ever held in his own country, though at the time he doubtless hoped it would lead to others.

While in Cuneo he kept up a lively correspondence with his many friends, and was attempting to make a small collection of the portraits of some of them. These letters bring his life there vividly before us.

Well, then, here I am at Cuneo [he writes to Count Zampieri da Imola²], Keeper of His Majesty's Stores for the new fortifications. The post, which should advance my interests, pleases me the more the further it takes me from my relations and the more independent of them it makes me. To cut a long story short, I never managed to get on very well with them, thanks to a Phaedra we have had in the house for some years past. But to pass on. I must inform you that if you could give your sister aforesaid [Baretti had been rallying Zampieri on having

¹ "Piacevoli poesie," iv.

² 1743 or 1744.

Monna Poltroneria—my Lady Idleness—for a sister] a good nudge and tear yourself away from her just for a moment, or at least long enough to allow you to send me a few lines, they would be most welcome, more so now than ever, for I am in a land inhabited by buffaloes in human shape, . . . so that I am forced to throw myself on my friends' mercy and beg them to tell me in their letters what I hope for in vain from the lips of the men of Cuneo. Now, if I am not asking too much, may it please you, my dear, good Signor Camillo, to relieve me to some extent from the boredom I am enduring from being obliged to associate with these asses, by means of a few of your lively, scholarly letters? As my work only keeps me busy for two days a week, I have ample time to devote to agreeable correspondence.

He goes on to say that he is busy writing verses, and probably a number of the chapters in the “Piacevoli poesie” were composed at this period.

On his way to Cuneo he had visited the Abbate Girolamo Tagliazzucchi, his old master,¹ who had been glad to see him. In June 1744, while he was at Cuneo, his father died.

A short while before the Siege of Cuneo [he writes²], as I think I told you, my father died, and before his death he arranged his affairs in such a way for his four sons, that a treacherous

¹ Stanzas to Padre Serafino Bianchi.

² Letter to Zampieri, Venice, May 6, 1747.

stepmother, now a countess and a minister's wife, robbed us of some twenty thousand sequins¹ in ready money, so that instead of having enough to live upon comfortably, as I expected, I found myself in difficulties, and obliged to humble myself before my Sovereign in the hope of being granted a pension.

His stepmother quickly married her old friend Capriglio, who was made a count, and lived till 1751. His wife survived till 1770.

But the War of the Austrian Succession soon put an end to Baretti's employment ; the fortifications of Cuneo were hastily finished, and he again found himself unoccupied in 1745, having left the town a few days before the siege began.

In connection with Cuneo it is interesting to note that many years later, during his travels in Spain, Baretti fell in with some Spanish soldiers, one of whom had actually been at the siege, according to his own account ; but his description was so exaggerated—for, among other things, he said that the place was surrounded by seven rings of walls, and that “the cursed fortress was larger and stronger than the famous one in Milan”—that Baretti could not decide whether he was merely swaggering or whether he had never been there at all. “The good corporal succeeded in drawing tears to the eyes of his companions and

¹ A sequin was worth from 9s. 2d. to 9s. 6d.—roughly £9,250.

myself by describing the sufferings he endured at the siege under the Infante Filippo," and Baretti found the tale so amusing that he could not bring himself to spoil it.¹ "Little did he think," he adds,² "that he was talking to one who had been two years at Cuneo, assisting at those fortifications, which I left but a few days before that siege."

The changes at home now made it more possible for him to live in Turin, where he remained for some months idle, or rather unemployed, for Baretti was far too energetic ever to do nothing for long; but he soon grew tired of the life, and determined to try his fortunes once more in Venice.

¹ "Lettere familiari," xlvi.

² "Journey," i. 310.

CHAPTER III

VENICE AND TURIN

1745—1751

VENICE was a far greater literary centre than Turin, and Baretti returned thither a very different person from what he had been when he left it some years earlier. He had an established literary position, and could associate with Gaspare Gozzi and his friends on equal terms. It was probably during this visit that he became a member of the Academy of the Granelleschi, that strange Venetian academy of which Carlo Gozzi—the “Solitario,” as he was called there—was one of the moving spirits. Like other academies, it was founded to carry on “warfare against those false, emphatic, metaphorical, and figured fashions which had been introduced like plague-germs by the Seicentisti,”¹ and also, it may be added, against the “Frugonisms,” as Baretti called them, the affectations

¹ Symonds’s “Gozzi’s Memoirs,” ii. 93 ff., from which the other quotations are also taken.

introduced by Frugoni, a popular Arcadian shepherd of the day who was widely imitated.

But the Venetian academy had a frivolous side to it, thoroughly in keeping with eighteenth-century Venice; and the Venetian Government smiled upon it, as diverting the attention of some of the ablest citizens from politics and other serious matters. There was at that time in Venice a certain Giuseppe Secchellari, a man of amazing conceit, who had been flattered into believing himself to be the possessor of wonderful parts. It was decided to make him President of the society, with the title of Arcigranellone, or *Chief of the Dunces*.¹ "A solemn coronation of this precious simpleton with a wreath of plums followed in due course." He was a small man, and had to clamber up into his seat of office, a huge chair which, he was told, had once belonged to Cardinal Bembo, and which was surmounted by an owl with two balls in its right claw, the crest of the academy. The Arcigranellone never seems to have had the least suspicion that he was being laughed at, and took his duties with portentous seriousness. His position was not an enviable one. Round his neck he wore a gold medal weighing a pound, and attached to a brass chain.

¹ Granello, among other things, means "a dunce." For the whole question of the meaning of the term "Granelleschi," see Symonds's note, as above.

When we met in the heat of summer, iced drinks were handed round to the members, but the Prince, to mark his superiority, received a bowl of boiling tea upon a silver salver. In the depth of winter, on the other hand, hot coffee was served to us and iced water to the Prince,

who never, apparently, made any complaints. But good work was done at the meetings when the preliminary fun with the Prince was over. Squibs and satires were published against worthless writers and their books, and the Society served as a centre for the encouragement of the study of good literature. The Gozzi were not great men, but they had sound taste and a genuine love of the classical writers of Italy, which enabled them to render considerable service to her literature.

Baretti's life in Venice must have been much the same as it had been in Milan. He wrote occasional verse, read hard, and threw himself heartily into the social amusements of the place. The literary society was probably as gay as it had been in Milan, if not gayer, and he made many friends, though Venice never had for him quite the glamour of the old days in Milan, where he had had his first taste of success.

Baretti was now to show himself in a new light, and one in which he was well fitted to

shine. "I am frank of speech," he says of himself,¹ "and tell the truth quite bluntly. Imagine how I should fare at a court!" Like most people who habitually boast of their frankness and truthfulness, he had a way of laying more stress on disagreeable than on agreeable truths. One day he received a letter containing an old sonnet of his, which had been written to celebrate the taking of the veil by a young lady. It began as follows: "Holy Angels, ring the bells backwards in Paradise; for, in contempt of all earthly joys, she aspires to become your peer above."² The sonnet goes on in much the same style to the end. It is not a good one, as Baretti himself admits, but it is up to the average. He even declares it to be the first he ever wrote, but this was probably only for controversial purposes. It had been printed in a selection in Turin in 1741. With the sonnet was a parody, written on the model of the "bouts rimés" competitions so common in those days. "And when did you ever hear of angels ringing bells in Heaven, either for grief or joy—you, who know so little about the literature of this world and nothing at all about that of the

¹ "Piacevoli poesie," to Count Zampieri, already quoted.

² Angeli santi, a doppio per letizia
Suonate in Paradiso le campane;
Perchè spazzando le cose mondane
Costà vuol diventar vostra patrizia.

next?"¹ This last was a better home-thrust than its author realised, as Dr. Johnson was to discover, to his horror, in the London days. The parody was continued to the end of the sonnet.

The letter was anonymous, but it did not take Baretti long to guess the author's name. There was at that time a certain Dr. Biagio Schiavo, of Este, a vain, quarrelsome priest, well known everywhere for his acrimonious disposition. He had some ground for complaint against Baretti. When Balestrieri made his collection, "Tears on the Death of a Cat,"² Schiavo had contributed a villainous sonnet, which had been rejected by Balestrieri at Baretti's suggestion. Schiavo's aggressive habits had already got him into trouble more than once. He had at different times attacked Muratori and Focciolati. Muratori, the father of mediæval history and compiler of the famous "Annali d'Italia," a man whom Gibbon respected as a guide and a master, treated him with the contempt he deserved, and refused to answer; but the energetic Focciolati had him clapped into prison. Baretti determined on a different course. He would hold up Schiavo to the ridicule of the whole of Italy, realising that

¹ E quando mai per lutto o per letizia
Udisti Angioli in ciel suonar campane?
Tu, che si poco sai di lettere umane
E di divine poi non hai notizia?

² "Lagrime in morte d'un gatto."

this was the cruellest punishment that could be inflicted on such a man. The following account is taken from Baretti's letters to a friend in Milan.¹

The Dedication begins : “ Most honourable Signor Dottore, I have been seized with a fancy to dedicate these letters of mine to you, letters written somewhat hastily, yet full, as you will see, of the praise you so richly deserve,” and begs Schiavo to correct any mistakes there may be in the Italian. Then he describes how, on the evening of the receipt of the letter, he and his friends went, as usual, to Menegazzo’s coffee-house, which was at the entrance to the Merceria San Giuliano, on the right as you go towards the Ponte dei Barattieri, and was then the chief meeting-place of the wits of Venice. There the anonymous letter was read in Schiavo’s presence by Baretti, and discussed by himself and his friends, who heaped every kind of abuse on the writer. Schiavo sat and listened in silence with Zannetti, the faithful little priest who followed him about like a dog. Here is Baretti’s portrait of his enemy. Imagine—

a man of moderate height, with a fair, round belly ; a great, fat, ugly moon-face, looking like a melon ; a pair of huge blear-eyes, apparently lined with ham ; an insignificant nose, wrinkling

¹ Lettere di G. B. Torinese ad un suo amico di Milano sopra un certo fatto del Dottor Biagio Schiavo d’Este [Lugano], Settembre 1747. Cp. Piccioni, “ Studi,” pp. 152 ff.

every now and then in the middle ; heavy cheeks, hanging under the jaw, the lower lip protruding somewhat ; his head well covered with long, lank, blackish, whitish, yellowish hair ; a face you could swear he had borrowed from Mordecai the Rabbi,—imagine, I say, all these beauties of person combined in a man of seventy-two, and you have the portrait of the Rev. Dr. Biagio Schiavo.

The picture is vivid, if violent, and brings the man before us to the life.

On the following evening the war was carried into the enemy's territory. Baretti explained how he had prevented the publication of the sonnet of a certain babbler, who should be nameless, and read the sonnet, which was mercilessly commented on by the company. The attack was finally driven home by Baretti's producing a verse-description of his foe, which his friends criticised as being much too mild for its subject. Schiavo sat there trembling with rage, till at last his tormentors went off and left him alone in the shop, where he never afterwards ventured to show his face.

Schiavo, as may be expected, never threw away a chance of abusing Baretti, attacking him for his alleged want of respect for Petrarch, for Schiavo belonged to the body of Petrarch's slavish imitators. In order to make an end of the whole affair, Baretti published his letters with full details of the

quarrel, after which nothing more was heard from Schiavo. The revenge is certainly out of all proportion to the offence, but it was richly deserved by the man's whole career. Nothing is spared, neither character, nor ability, nor personal appearance. Mazzuchelli warns people against quarrelling with a man whose powers of invective and ridicule are so wonderfully rich ; but he thinks he goes too far. Not that Baretti was quick to take offence ; he passed by more than one attack unnoticed ; but when once roused, he was merciless, and lost all sense of proportion, using any weapon that came to hand. Hence his literary quarrels instantly became famous, and got him into trouble when his enemies were powerful.

Just before leaving Venice he undertook to translate all Corneille for a bookseller. This performance he himself afterwards described as “terribly dull and insipid”¹ ; but he excuses himself by saying that he was in want of money at the time, and dashed off in a few months a task which it would have required years to do well. He has obviously taken more pains with some of the famous plays like the *Cid* ; but most people will sympathise with the author of a skit of the day, which represents Corneille on his knees in the next world begging that his translator may not be pardoned for his offence. This was the first complete

¹ Letter to Carcano, June 3, 1763.

version of Corneille to appear in Italy, where French tragedy reigned supreme; so there must have been some demand even for this poor performance.

In the letter to Zampieri¹ already quoted, he thanks him for subscribing to the Corneille, as it “will bring credit to my book,” at a time when the absurdity of a long list of subscribers was so necessary.

You must know [he proceeds] that the only recreation I allow myself is to pass a few hours in the evening with some poets, and that I spend the whole day at my desk, translating and correcting the translation or the proofs, for there is not a living soul here capable of correcting the French text for me. This is my mode of life, entirely in accordance with my wishes, though the weariness of it all is killing me. I say in accordance with my wishes, for during the last few years I have half turned into stone.

He had long hoped for a pension—and now, please God, I shall get it by means of this dedication—a desperate step I am taking to obtain a definite promise; for, let me tell you, the Duke is a charming Prince, and if God spares him, I hope he will become an ornament to our Italy and a great patron of men of letters. As I said, my father’s death has spoilt my life. In addition to this I have suffered a cruel blow, which affected me so seriously that it nearly killed me, in

¹ Venice, May 6, 1747.

the death of a girl whom I loved above everything else on earth. It has pierced my very soul, and neither change of place, nor all my dear friends, nor work, nor anything else can lift it from my heart, though it is now a year since God took her. To God she certainly belonged.

Baretti here displays a depth of feeling rare in his letters. Young girls always had a warm place in his heart. "His eye, when he was inclined to please or be pleased, when he was conversing with young people, and especially young women, was cheerful and engaging."¹ But whether this girl was one in whom he was merely interested, or whether he was really in love with her, we have no means of deciding.

Then his tone changes. We feel his mercurial temperament asserting itself, and in a burst of self-satisfaction he describes himself as—

one made to love able and honest men; a fiery fellow who turns savage in a moment and whose hand flies to his sword; who speaks several Italian dialects tolerably well, who sings Italian songs and little musical airs in the French style [these musical accomplishments were not appreciated by all his friends, certainly not by Gaspare Gozzi, who talks in his letters of "that young fellow from Turin coming to visit us and singing to us one evening with that infernal voice of his"]; who could make a stone laugh at times; agreeable and most obliging with the ladies [here again, as we

¹ *European Magazine*, vol. xvi. p. 93.

have seen, there might be two opinions], but without compliment or ceremony towards a man ; with no great literary attainments, though he knows a mere babbler when he sees him and hates a dullard or a disagreeable boor, no matter what his position, and is as bitter, sarcastic, and rough with them as he is sincere, cordial, frank, and as generous as his means allow with all who are neither dullards nor disagreeable boors. Put all this together, and you will have some idea of Baretti, who is loved in Venice, in Mantua, in Milan, in Turin, and wherever he has been by all who love the lovers of virtue—and there's an end to my panegyric.

He adds that he hopes to visit Bologna, Florence, Rome, and Naples, and promises to call upon Zampieri on the way.

The prefaces to the Corneille are interesting as they contain the first of Baretti's violent onslaughts on blank verse in Italian. When an idea was once firmly fixed in his head, nothing could ever shake it : it became a part of his nature, and he would defend it against all comers at all times, and allow no extenuating circumstances. To him the very words “Goldoni,” “Arcadia,” and “blank verse” became insufferable, and instantly set him in a passion. Yet, strangest thing of all, he had himself executed his translation in the blank verse which he now attacked so vigorously in the prefaces. He excused the inconsistency by his own lack of ability, declaring

that his only object was to give his countrymen an idea of the great French tragic poet. He maintains that blank verse is opposed to the character of the Italian language and to the nature of its poetry; otherwise it would have been discovered two centuries before Trissino, who first introduced it into Italy. Blank verse might be suitable to tragedy, but only "when a tragic poet arises in Italy who is really a great poet," though even then rhyme would be more effective. By rhyme he does not mean the rhymed couplet alone; he even includes stanzas, especially the "ottava rima"; though how, even allowing for the easiness of finding rhymes in Italian, the ottava rima can be well suited for dramatic dialogue is difficult for a foreigner, at least, to understand.

Baretti now returned to Turin, determined to try to find a settled occupation. As we have seen, the rapacity of his stepmother had embarrassed the family finances, and he was bound to do something. He afterwards owned in London that he had gambled away his own fortune at faro, which accounts for the different financial position of himself and his brothers.¹ His chief hope lay in attracting the attention of Prince Vittorio Amedeo, Duke of Savoy, who was fond of literature and loved to play the Mæcenas to

¹ *Eur. Mag.*, vol. xv. p. 349.

men of letters, and was rewarded by reams of flattery in verse and prose of every description, though he appears to have deserved the praise more than is often the case. In 1744 Baretti published his stanzas to Padre Serafino Bianchi, who was then in Cuneo for Lent, which are interesting for the quantity of biographical matter they contain. In these he speaks in the highest terms of the Duke, adding, unblushingly, that if he once realised the high opinion that he—Baretti—held of him, “he would give me a pension.” In the following year he addressed a poem to the Duke, requesting exemption from service in the militia, and the granting of the request must have raised high hopes in a man of Baretti’s sanguine temperament. He had also, as we noticed, dedicated his *Corneille* to the same patron. Again, in 1750, on his return to Turin, he wrote two dramatic dialogues, one of which was printed, to celebrate the Duke’s marriage with a Spanish princess; and the prospects of his attaining his object were daily growing brighter.

It was now that he made the collection of the best of his verse called the “*Piacevoli poesie*,” which was printed at Turin in 1750. As he gradually abandoned poetry for prose from this time, we must say something about his poetical productions. In his own day these were highly

esteemed. "His style is easy," says Mazzuchelli, "but instinct with a high seriousness and wonderfully charming." He regrets that so much of his verse was scattered in collections and periodicals. But, speaking with all diffidence as a foreigner, it does not seem to me to have much real value. It is altogether uninspired, and one feels that Baretti is merely one of the "ingenious and respectable" poets of the eighteenth century, when "verse was clear and crisp as prose," and treatises and letters were written indifferently in either the one or the other. Its chief interest to us now lies in the matter it contains. Taste has changed too much for us to be able to take Baretti seriously as a poet. Unfortunately, the censorship prevented him from publishing any of his satirical pieces in Turin. The best thing about him is his sting, and when this is drawn his verse seems rather flat. One could wish he had published his selection in Venice, where he had originally intended to bring out a volume of verse by modern imitators of Berni;¹ but there he would have been obliged to include so much inferior work by young poetasters of the day, unless he wished to give great offence, that he was compelled to abandon the plan.

Baretti was now fated to spoil all his chances of employment at home by his combative disposition

¹ Letter to Zampieri, May 6, 1747.

and his skill in the art of controversy.¹ The science of archæology was just beginning to arise in Italy. Herculaneum had been discovered in 1711, and the tunnels and the finds are enthusiastically described by Gray and Walpole in their letters. Pompeii was brought to light in 1755. Collections of medals and of antiquities of all kinds were being made by every man of means who wished to pass for a man of taste. In fact, archæology was the fashion and was rapidly becoming a mania. Goldoni laughs at it in his "*Famiglia del antiquario*" and the excess to which it can be carried. It was only natural that in its early days ridiculous claims and equally ridiculous blunders should be made in connection with these new discoveries.

About this time Cardinal Quirini came into possession of an antique bas-relief in ivory, which had originally been used as a book-cover, technically known as a diptych. This was afterwards presented by its owner to the Vatican Library, and such was its fame that we are told that people spoke of the diptych-library instead of the diptych in the library. The Cardinal published a copy of his find, and every antiquary in Italy at once came forward with an explanation. Giuseppe Bartoli, who had recently succeeded Tagliazzuechi as Professor of Literature

¹ Piccioni, "*Studi e ricerche*," pp. 170 ff.

in Turin, published a volume of five letters, ornamented with quotations from various classics, stating that he and he alone possessed the real explanation, which, however, was not forthcoming. There appeared instead a huge quarto volume in 1749 with seven more letters in explanation of his unfulfilled promise. Indeed, the only real explanation did not appear till 1757, and then with many reservations; and great was the indignation when it was found to be the same as that already offered by Foccidati and others.

Baretti was certainly not the only man to feel disgust at these proceedings, but he was the only one who gave vent to his disgust in print; and this he did to some purpose. In the "Primo cicalamento" he shows up Bartoli, giving a series of amusing recipes for the manufacture of similar volumes; and not content with this, he makes a violent attack on antiquaries in general. He fails to understand why, instead of being sent to an asylum, they are taken seriously and treated as great men. It is all very well for the nobility to dabble in such amusements, which are a better way for them to pass their time than in gambling. But a man in Bartoli's position had no right to encourage his pupils, who had to earn their living, to waste valuable time on such follies. He declares that all such studies before the time of Constantine

are absurd, and urges upon young men the necessity of studying languages, rhetoric, and philosophy, and the sciences and arts calculated to promote their own success in life and the good of their country.

Henceforth archæology takes its place among his pet aversions. When he came back to Italy and started the *Frusta letteraria* he returns to the charge, and in one of the numbers offers a bunch of radishes as a reward for the right interpretation of a meaningless inscription invented for the occasion. At that period archæologists undoubtedly made claims that the state of their science could not justify, which outraged Baretti's sound common sense. His remarks sound absurd in the light of subsequent events, but he could hardly be expected to foresee the brilliant results that were to follow from future study and research.

This onslaught made a sensation. The archæologists were not really sure of themselves, and probably realised that there was some ground for the attack. Their inability to reply only made them the more angry. Baretti did not realise what a wasps' nest he had stirred up. All the men of learning drew together to protect their precious productions. They managed to represent to the authorities that an attack on a professor, however well deserved, was really

an attack on those who appointed him, and therefore a personal insult to the King. Baretti was summoned before no less a person than the President of the Senate, together with the Chancellor of the University of Turin, and was forbidden to publish any more "Cicalamenti." They rated him soundly, and compelled him to give up all the remaining copies of his work to a Censor of Studies ("Riformatore degli studi").

You will see no more "Cicalamenti" [he writes to Bicetti.¹] If I were not something of a savage and a fearless wild beast, and had I not answered the President of the Senate proudly and boldly, things would have gone badly with me, for the King had bidden this same President threaten to shut me up in the fortress for the rest of my days on account of the Cicalamento, which was regarded as a libel upon His Majesty before I was sent for; but I was desperate and I spoke desperately, and managed to undeceive the world and come out in safety: it is a bad business, however.

Then he describes his life in Turin.

I am in excellent health. I live with my two brothers here, and the three of us are not badly off. I eat well and can hardly be said to drink little, sleep peacefully and never allow myself to worry about anything. I am not such a Stoic in my way of life as I was. I have grown more civilised and am gallant with the ladies, though

¹ Turin, May 2, 1750.

I am not in love with any of them. I have only two or three friends in Turin, and am myself a friend of all the world. Poetry I read and moral philosophy and a little politics in my spare time. Poetry amuses me, while the philosophy acts as a check on my excessive high spirits, whether natural or acquired, and the politics teach me to know the good and avoid the bad and to live without either.

From this it would seem that he was not as popular in Turin as he had been in Venice or Milan. It was less a literary centre, for Piedmont was not intellectually one of the most important districts of the peninsula. Yet he appears to have been happy there. He had the society of his brothers, for whom his affection was genuine, and there is a certain Sandra or Sandrotta, a lady to whom several of the “Piacevoli poesie” are addressed, who probably added to the attractions of the place in his eyes.

But now his prospects of a lucrative appointment had been ruined by his attack on Bartoli, which, at the time, he was thought to have made out of jealousy and personal pique at not having been made Professor in his stead, as Bartoli had been little known hitherto ; and because he hoped the attack would bring him into notice and improve his prospects. But in a letter to Malacarne he admits his unfitness for the post—he did not know Greek, for one thing—and altogether denies the charge, saying that it was merely the

weariness he felt on reading the letters that drove him into print. Baretti's denials must not be taken too literally, and he may well have hoped to increase his reputation by the attack. If so, he failed hopelessly.

In the eighteenth century it was practically impossible to make a living out of literature in Italy. Even to-day, with the exception of one or two of the most popular novelists, very few writers get more than a bare pittance by their pens. The reading public is very small, and now, as then, looks largely to France for its books. Moreover, every province has its own dialect, which is scarcely intelligible to the people of the next; so that a novel really describing the life of any one district can only appeal to a very small audience.

The trade of writing books [says Baretti¹] is by no means a profitable trade in Italy, and few are those among us that get anything by it. Half a dozen mercenary writers make a small penny in Venice with some translation from the French or the English. . . . As to Goldoni and Chiari, they scarcely got from the managers of the Venetian theatres ten pounds for each of their plays, when they both were at the zenith of their undeserved popularity. . . . It is the general custom for our authors to make a present of their works to booksellers, who in return scarcely give a few copies of their books when printed.

¹ "Manners and Customs," chap. xiv.

Metastasio's bookseller in Venice made over £10,000 out of his books, but Metastasio himself not a penny.

Our learned stare when they are told that in England there are numerous writers who get their bread by their productions only.

Baretti told Johnson in London that he was “the first man that ever received copy-money”—*i.e.* money for copyright—“in Italy.”¹

Nor is this the only difficulty against which writers must contend.

Nothing is printed in Italy without being first licensed by two, and sometimes more, revisers appointed by the civil and ecclesiastical government. . . . I wish no ill [he continues] to the liberty of the English press, and everybody who knows me personally knows that I am a tolerable good Englishman, though born and bred in Italy. However, I cannot forget that at bottom I am still an Italian, and I know the nettlesome temper of my dear countrymen so well, that I should be very sorry to see them enjoy this English privilege.

As coming from one who had suffered so much inconvenience from the censorship in Italy, this expression of opinion is highly interesting.

Everything considered, Baretti's prospects at home looked so black that he determined to try his fortunes in London.

¹ Hill's Boswell, iii. 162.

CHAPTER IV

FIRST VISIT TO ENGLAND

1751—1760

THERE is a good reason for thinking that Baretti's decision to go to London had not been taken hastily. As early as June 22, 1748, he wrote to the Countess Imbonati, the sister of his friend Bicetti :

I do not know what will happen about my coming journey ; I am not sure whether I shall take it or not, nor whether I should enjoy it or not. However, if I do take it, I shall bid you good-bye by letter first ; and in all probability I shall send you an account of the country, if you will allow me.

This letter almost certainly refers to a proposed trip to England, for seeing new countries and new things was a passion with Baretti, who was very restless.

He had already begun to work at English. Among the “Piacevoli poesie” is a letter to Count Caroccio del Villars, of Turin, congratulating him on having learnt English perfectly in seven months, and being able to sing our songs like an

Englishman. “ I have been working at it, too, for the last three months, but am hopelessly lost in it still, and so far I have not even learnt a couple of declensions, . . . and can hardly manage to call my sweet Sandrotta ‘ my life, my soul, my lady.’ ”¹ In reality he must have done more than this, for he afterwards told Johnson—

that, meeting in the course of his studying English with an excellent paper in the *Spectator*, one of four that were written by the respectable Dissenting Minister, Mr. Grant of Taunton, and observing the genius and energy of mind it exhibits, it greatly quickened his curiosity to visit our country ; as he thought if such were the lighter periodical essays of our authors, their productions on more weighty occasions must be wonderful indeed.²

The idea of coming to England appears to have been originally suggested to him either by James, Viscount Caulfield, afterwards first Earl of Charlemont, or by some Englishmen whom he was teaching Italian in Venice in 1748—another proof, if one were wanted, that he was in Venice and not in Turin, as his early biographers state, in that year.³ Lord Charlemont was born in 1728, in Dublin, and educated privately. He started on a tour on the Continent in 1746, with reference to which Dr. Johnson, after remarking how little

¹ “ So appena dir, ‘ my life, my soul, my lady.’ ”

² Hill’s *Boswell*, iv. 32. . . . ³ *Eur. Mag.*, vol. xv. p. 349.

travelling supplied to the conversation of any man who has travelled, observed, “I never but once heard him [Lord Charlemont] talk of what he had seen, and that was of a large serpent in one of the Pyramids of Egypt.” Boswell had heard him tell the same story. He spent a year in Turin, where he met Hume and also Baretti, to whom he took a genuine liking.

Upon your arrival in Italy [writes Baretti in the Dedication of his “Manners and Customs of Italy” to him] a lucky chance brought me within the sphere of your notice ; and from that fortunate moment a friendship began on your Lordship’s side, that has never suffered any abatement ; and an attachment on mine which will never cease as long as I have life.

Malone says Lord Charlemont was the politest man he had ever seen. “In him politeness is no effort. It arises naturally and necessarily from his warm and affectionate heart.”¹

Lord Charlemont was highly cultivated and an important political personage in his own country. He prevented impending trouble in the North of Ireland by his prudence and firmness, and was made an Earl for his services in 1763. In the following year he went to London, where he had a house for some years, which was frequented by all the most prominent men of the day. Johnson, Burke,

¹ Prior’s Malone, p. 357.

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Reynolds, Beauclerk, Goldsmith, and Hogarth were among his friends, and he was a member of the famous Literary Club. When he returned to Ireland his house in Dublin was even more important as an intellectual centre. At his death he left "Select Sonnets of Petrarch" with a translation and notes, as well as a "History of Italian Poetry," which he had never published. His interest in Italian literature was therefore genuine. He proved a good friend to Baretti. His biographer tells us that "he had originally prompted him [Baretti] to try his fortunes in London."¹

Baretti thought that with Lord Charlemont's help he could find work in London. At home he had no prospects, so that he was probably glad to turn his back upon his country. He left for London in January 1751. Immediately on his arrival he set about learning English, and this is how he did it.²

For the first two months I could not understand a single syllable; but when I had succeeded in fixing in my head a few hundred words by continually working at nouns, verbs, and other parts of speech, I made every one I came across read me out these words not once only, but ten times and more, and tried all the while to pronounce the most difficult; and thus, by gradually accustoming my ears to the sound, I made what was

¹ Hardy's "Lord Charlemont," i. 82. ² "Lettere familiari," xi.

considered extraordinary progress in that strange and most irregular tongue. It is true that nature has given me some facility in learning languages, and that my frequent changes from place to place in early life have increased this facility, for I have always tried to speak the dialect of every place where I have ever made a short stay.

Moreover, all the characters in the old *Commedia dell' Arte* were supposed to come from different provinces and to speak different dialects, which must therefore have been far more widely known than at present. Baretti tells us that when he went to the play as a boy he used to imitate the various characters: Pantalone in Venetian, Truffaldino in Bergamasc, the Doctor in Bolognese, etc. He learnt Milanese so thoroughly during his stay in Milan that he says he was taken for a Milanese by the people in the town.

These Italian dialects are very different from our own. They are distinct languages, with different words in many cases and an utterly different pronunciation. The various Italian provinces, it must be remembered, were once independent kingdoms, and the dialects are to this day usually spoken by the upper classes among themselves. They are so utterly unlike one another that a Genoese could not understand a Neapolitan in the least, if they both talked dialect. Literary Italian is really an artificial language,

described popularly as “Tuscan language, Roman accent.”¹

Baretti’s progress in English was really remarkable. We shall soon find him publishing writings of his own in our language which, without showing the absolute mastery of the tongue and the rich vocabulary that he afterwards acquired, are nevertheless well written, though one feels that he is still moving uneasily in his new medium. Of course it is impossible to say how much he was helped by friends in these early works. His spelling, however, was always weak; but this is only natural in one of his impatient nature. English is well known to be one of the hardest languages to spell correctly; and how many even well-educated Englishmen of the present day have the right to cast the first stone?

London² in Baretti’s day was still a city of two bridges—London Bridge, the Ponte Vecchio of the place, as Baretti calls it, lined with shops, and Westminster Bridge; while along the right bank of the Thames there stretched a mere fringe of houses for some ten miles. He thought London itself badly built as compared with the city of Westminster. Grosvenor Square filled him with admiration, as also did Lincoln’s Inn, which is three times the size of St. Mark’s Square. But what struck him most was the great street that

“Lingua Toscana in bocca Romana.” ² Custodi, i. 325 ff.

runs right through London, with its endless stream of people, carts, and carriages, its droves of oxen and flocks of sheep, and its long line of shops on either side, all with their signs, “white lions, green tigers, bears, turkeys, stags and deer, golden horses, and other similar strange devices in endless numbers, so that if a man took the trouble he could write the strangest book in the world about them. . . . There are more people in this one street than in all Modena or Genoa.”

But it is when Baretti begins to describe the life of London that he is most interesting. A foreigner is often struck by things which would not be noticed by a native, who has been used to them all his life, and which would consequently be lost to future generations. It is well known that first impressions of a place are generally the truest and most lasting; and when they come from a man of Baretti’s intelligence they are of real value. Moreover, Baretti remained true to these impressions. The points that he raises in this early letter were to him the most characteristic of London life ever afterwards, and he is continually returning to them. “London is a great city, with a great population, rich in science and art, but richest of all in wealth.” The streets—

are made infinitely more attractive by the charming and modest bearing of endless ladies and young girls; and among them are hundreds and

thousands of perfect beauty. But in this wretched world of ours good is always mixed with evil, and as you go through the streets your eyes are shocked by countless unpleasant sights. Ugly, hopelessly ugly, houses are far too common on every side. The streets are badly paved, filled with mud black as ink and with every kind of filth ; and it is difficult, unless you are very active on your feet, to get out of the way of all the horses and carriages which, even if they do not actually touch you, cover your coat with dirty splashes.

It is true that London is well provided with cabs ; but in these you are so terribly shaken that it is better to go on foot unless you are in a hurry or have the gout. Thrice and four times blessed are those who can afford carriages with springs !

But at least Baretti is better off than the poor wretches whom he sees everywhere in the streets clothed in horrible rags and in the filthiest state. In spite of the hospitals and the vast amount spent in private charity and the heavy sums paid by the Poor Law, there are enough of them to fill a province. This is no exaggeration.

A few days after my arrival I had the good fortune to make the acquaintance of Henry Fielding, author of “Tom Jones,” “Jonathan Wild,” and many other works that must be known to you in French translations. He is one of the junior magistrates of the city, and is therefore well informed as to its condition.

Baretti asked him whether some of the beggars

of both sexes did not die of hunger and want. "Over a thousand, or even two thousand, in the course of a year," he answered; "but London is so large it is hardly noticed." He adds that it is the plentiful supply of money and the consequent dearness of living that are at the root of all this misery.

Then, there is no corner of the city in which his ears are not assailed by some horrible noise, and he expects to come back to Italy quite deaf.

The natural harshness of the voices of the English and their ignorance of music will crack my ear-drums. Their Beard, Champness, Miss Young, and Mrs. Cibber would frighten you out of your senses if you heard them sing on the stage. Would you believe it, that among all the thousands of beautiful women and young girls who gather here from every part of the island in winter, hardly a dozen have good voices?

Yet they have a passion for singing and hearing music, and pay highly for it, and they fight against nature herself in making it the chief element in a woman's education. Most absurd of all, their faces remain as impassive as marble when they hear the best Italian singers.

But their metallic voices are sweetness itself when compared with the other noises that torture you. There is no need to read Dante to get an idea of the kingdom of Satan. You have only to come to London to hear the fiendish noise of the

carts, horses, and coaches ; and the shouts of the carters, coachmen, and passengers from earliest dawn till latest night ; and the ceaseless horrible oaths of this terribly profane people, which are loud and powerful enough to turn aside Jove's own thunder and lightning in terror. At night there is the joy of listening to the different watchmen—poking at every door and every shop and calling out each hour in harsh, angry voices. And then the sweet solace of listening to the clang of the bells rung by certain vile hounds who go round and collect letters for the post, and of hearing the desperate cries of hundreds of sweeps, or of the milk-women in the morning, or of the oyster-sellers in the evening !

Then there is the musical sound of the bells of the oxen being led to slaughter, and of the huge flocks of sheep, often scattering in every direction like wild beasts on a holiday.

Living is so dear that the honest poor must work like galley-slaves from Monday morning till Saturday night to get enough for themselves and their families to live on ; and Sunday is the saddest of all days for them, as drink is the only pleasure left for the poor by law—drink and prostitution ; for vice in the streets of London is pitiable, worse than in any other city Baretti knows, and horrible in its sordid ugliness. The rich alone can have amusements on Sunday unchecked by the law, the least breach of which among the poor is eagerly watched for and severely punished.

Crime is everywhere rife. Even children are often seized and stripped of all their clothes and then abandoned.

This is how Baretti sees London. He returns to these points again and again, and who can fail to recognise Hogarth's London in the picture? On the one hand the charm of the women, in whose praise Baretti can never say enough, contrasting their modesty with the character of his own country-women, and on the other the appalling misery of the lower classes, who could not, or would not, earn a living wage. London is still a city of contrasts, though it is now only one great town among many, so perhaps the contrasts are not so striking. The wealth and the size of London overwhelmed Baretti, and the noise maddened him; but if the women appealed to his heart in one direction, the misery of the poor did so equally in another. Like Johnson, he was a charitable man, and always carried a pocket full of small change to give away, ill as he could afford it; but in the end, in spite of all its faults, he came to love London more than any other city.

As to our climate, Baretti does not seem to have found it very objectionable, though at times he complains of the damp. "Many of my English friends," he says in the "Manners and Customs," "have often made me smile on a cold

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day, by asking whether we had any such cold in Italy? Indeed, the weather is much more severe in our northern and western parts than in London and the counties round."

For some months, he tells¹ a Venetian friend, he was too busy to leave London, but at last he found himself able to accept the invitation of a friend he had made in Vicenza to visit him at "Visbecchia," which I suppose must be Wisbeach. The house would not exactly make an impression on the Grand Canal; it is "merely a convenient, clean house, well stocked with all that can promote the comfort, or minister to the needs of a private station"—the very opposite, in fact, of the palaces of the Cornari, Morosini, Pesari, Pisani, etc., which are crowded with rich, showy furniture, but are altogether uncomfortable, dirty, and disorderly.

For the first few days he was dreadfully bored, as—

my host is a melancholy man and not in the least lively; and then he has a mother who cares for nothing but staying in her room and reading her Bible. We hardly saw any one during the whole week except a fat clergyman, who devoted much attention to eating and drinking, but very little to his books.

Imagine an Italian new to the country in such

¹ Custodi, i. 343.

surroundings, especially one of Baretti's sociable and lively temperament!

But next week all is changed. The races are on, and Baretti revels in them—the crowds, the betting, the training of the horses and jockeys—everything. He had never seen a horse-race before, and describes how the horses go three times round the course, covering three miles in less than six minutes.

When the first race is over, the noble animals have an hour's rest, and a number of men set to work to rub them down and dry them thoroughly and quickly, so that they can run again and then a third time after the lapse of an hour ; and the horse that has shown the best legs wins and its owner pockets the money, while the others scratch their heads and curse their luck.

By the time the races are over it is nearly dark, and every one goes back to his hotel, where we all put on our best clothes, for we go to the races in undress, ladies and gentlemen alike. About an hour after sunset we go to the ball, which takes place in a public hall, ladies being admitted free ; and then they begin by dancing minuets, just as we do at public balls at home. After this they throw themselves wildly into the country dances, which fire the blood of men and women alike. When they are tired out with dancing, supper, which has been prepared in another large room, is announced. Every one hastens to sit down at a huge table made by

placing a number of small tables of the same size close together. The men take their places in a long row on one side and the ladies on the other, each man facing his own partner. Some good clergyman, or, if there is none present, some important person in the neighbourhood, sits at the head of the table and asks a blessing on the food in a short grace, every one standing and saying Amen, after which there is eating and drinking and laughing and joking of all kinds ; but decency and good manners everywhere prevail, and the man who ventured to give the slightest offence to the ladies by a doubtful allusion or a questionable story, as is so common in that disreputable Venice of ours, would be looked upon as the last of flesh.

When this delightful supper is over, the bill is divided, each gentleman paying his share. Then we go back and dance or watch the dancing ; and not till Dawn peeps out of her window in the east do we break up and go home.

It would not be easy to find a more charming description of a country ball of the period than this.

In the eighteenth century foreigners were not at all common in London, and, when recognised, they at once became a butt for the wit of the lower classes. Baretti was often called a French dog, a comprehensive term of abuse for all foreigners, even Turks with long beards and turbans ; and he remarks pathetically that “ the

English hate idleness as much as they do the French or the Devil." Any man who wore his hair in a bag in the foreign fashion must expect to have it pulled by every facetious errand-boy who got the chance. At first Baretti doubtless had much to put up with, but he was tall and athletic and his expression far from agreeable, so that he commanded respect, and he rapidly adapted himself to his new surroundings. We first hear of him at the Orange Coffee-house in the Hay-market, at that period the great meeting-place for foreigners in London.

It was kept by a Mrs. Wingfield, who, if we can believe Badini's libellous attack on Baretti,¹ prevented him and many other foreigners from starving, by her timely assistance. Baretti tells us himself that "by taking my place in coffee-houses and at ordinaries,² hiding my utter wretchedness in the bottom of my heart, recommending myself frankly and honestly to those who looked like gentlemen, and by studying the language and customs of this people, I gradually improved my position."³ His pluck deserved the success he obtained. He soon made the acquaintance of Giardini, the famous violinist and composer, who spent many years in England, where he was very popular. They became fast

¹ "Il vero carattere di Giuseppe Baretti," etc., p. 46.

² "Tavole rotonde."

³ Letter to Gambarelli, August 25, 1785.

friends, and Baretti lodged with him afterwards for some time. Badini says that without him Baretti could have done nothing in London; and he doubtless found Baretti work at the Italian opera,¹ which was his first employment in London.

In 1753 the management of the Opera House was undertaken by Vanneschi, and when a quarrel arose between him and Giardini and the singers, Baretti sided with his friend, and lost his post, if he had not already given it up. Vanneschi had long been connected with the theatre. Horace Walpole tells us in 1741 that, whereas it is usual to give the poet fifty guineas for composing the book, Vanneschi and Rolli were allowed three hundred. Three hundred more he had for his journey to Italy to pick up dancers and performers. He had also brought over an Italian tailor, because there were none in London. "They have already given this *Taylorini* £400, and he has already taken a house of £30 a year." Vanneschi continued the management till 1756, when his quarrels with Mingotti, which excited almost as much interest as the rivalry between Handel and Bononcini, set the public against him and ended by making him a bankrupt, a prisoner in the Fleet, and at last a fugitive.²

¹ "Il vero carattere," etc., p. 51.

² Horace Walpole to Sir H. Mann, November 5, 1741.

Baretti published two skits on the situation in French. Unfortunately, both have apparently disappeared, and the following accounts are taken from Custodi,¹ who seems to have had them before him. Badini says that Giardini made him poet of the opposition theatre until he found it impossible to set his verses to music, when he was obliged to dismiss him.² He may have written the parody suggested in his first skit,³ which is a satire on a work to be brought out in 1754 by the second-rate company Vanneschi had been forced to engage since he had quarrelled with all the leading members of the profession. He suggests that a parody should be brought out at another theatre—a suggestion which was actually carried out and which ruined the original play.

The second⁴ shows that Baretti had not changed his methods. It begins with an ironical dedication to Signor Puccino Ministronzolo, and proceeds to heap ridicule upon the lessee of the theatre Van-schi (Vanneschi) and his new troop. It is written partly in French, partly in English.

Needless to say, Baretti added Vanneschi to the growing list of his enemies, as we gather

¹ p. 21.

² "Il vero carattere," etc., p. 53.

³ "Projet pour avoir un opéra à Londres dans un goût tout nouveau." Londres, 1753.

⁴ "La voix de la discorde, ou la bataille des violons—histoire d'un attentat séditieux et atroce contre la vie et les biens de cinquante chanteurs et violonistes." Londres, 1753.

from the following letter, and his connection with the opera and even the singers gradually ceased. He devoted himself more and more to teaching and to literature.

I shall be neither friend nor enemy [he writes to his brother Filippo¹] to all the wandering actors you mention, because Vanneschi will probably forbid them, under pain of his severe displeasure, to frequent my haunts; and then I am morally certain that they will have to go through so much to get their money and will curse the day they came to England so heartily, that I shall avoid them as if they were possessed, in order not to let my ears be profaned by their imprecations. Moreover, my daily occupations do not allow of my passing much time in doubtful company, such as that of these virtuous gentlemen and most virtuous ladies is usually considered.

A certain Buggiani, with his daughter, Bettina, and a young man called Maranesi will soon be going in your direction. The girl and the young man have danced here for the last three or four years with great success and made enough money to load a mule, all of which Buggiani has spent gaily with his friends. He is a sensible fellow, and one of the most amusing and delightful people I have ever met. I always liked him and Bettina, and Maranesi too, and have promised him an introduction to you. I should be very glad if you would do something for them, especially for the man and his daughter. Be sure to give him a good bottle of wine in which to drink my

¹ London, September 23, 1757.

health as soon as he arrives, and if you could present him with a cask of our best, it would be some return (but of course do not mention this to him) for the gold seal he gave me some years ago, with which I am sealing this letter. If you do anything, be sure and do it handsomely and in style, and in a kind and courteous manner, so as to help Bettina to succeed. Tell her not to forget to give you the kiss I gave her to take you, which she promised faithfully to deliver, and to sing you the little French song she sang for me, sitting on my knee, in Mazzei's arbour, that set every one laughing so. He and his daughter are great friends of Vanneschi, with good reason, and enemies of Mingotti and Giardini; but this makes no difference. They are my friends because I like them, and they may be friends of the Evil One for aught I care, to say nothing of Vanneschi. I am a friend to all whom I like and to my own interests. Buggiani will give you a long account of me, for he knows all about me almost better than I do myself. If the jolly fellow is not to your taste, put it down to my account.

Evidently Baretti did not abandon his old friends at the opera, even after he had severed his connection with it. He always thoroughly enjoyed congenial company of all kinds.

We must now follow him in his other occupations. He doubtless found it uphill work at first. As he has told us, he made the acquaintance of Fielding very soon after his arrival, and

a man of Baretti's energy and character, who had mixed in the society of the leading literary men of the day in his own country, must soon have attracted attention. As early as 1751 he had written "Remarks on the Italian Language and Writers" in the form of a letter, though it was not published till 1753. At that time Italian was widely known in England. Cultivated men like Gray, Walpole, and Johnson had learnt it thoroughly, and it was an important part of the education of the young girls of the day. The popularity of Italian opera encouraged its study; and it was usual, when going to the opera, for people to take candles with them in order to follow the book.¹ The custom must have been exceedingly dangerous for the ladies' dresses, to say nothing of the gorgeous clothes then worn by the gentlemen; but when the book was written by men of the standing of Metastasio and the dramatic part of the opera was almost entirely given in recitative, the custom becomes more intelligible. One wonders what the actors, and still more the actresses, thought of such a proceeding, which was not the rule in Italy.

It is a matter for serious regret that the study of Italian has so entirely died out in England. German has driven it almost completely from the field, though Italy is far the richer of the two

¹ "Manners and Customs," i. 303.

countries in great poets, being, in fact, second only to England in this respect. Even Italian opera is fleeing the land before Wagner. Yet Italy is the happy hunting-ground for the artist, and still more for the novelist. No novelist can be said to have arrived nowadays till he or she has written his or her Italian novel; and it is wonderful how small a supply of Italian is found necessary—an occasional “Chi sa?” or an “Avanti!” with a little Dante, say, “In mezzo del cammin di nostra vita,” which is about the period in their own lives when these writers begin to cross the Alps in order to prove that they are at last somebody, apparently enable them to obtain a thorough knowledge of Italian life, and to grasp the intricacies of that fascinating question, the relations between the Vatican and the Quirinal. However, they know their public, for they have doubtless watched it at an Italian play in London, and can feel confident of giving it about as much as it can understand, thereby flattering its vanity and not displaying their own ignorance. But it is a pity that, apparently for reasons of commerce, which might well be left to her brothers, the girl of to-day is made to devote her energies to endeavouring to acquire some knowledge of German, a far more difficult and much poorer language, instead of studying her French together with its sister-language Italian, and thereby having some prospect

of being able to enjoy them both and obtain a thorough knowledge of them.

Baretti gradually won a position as a teacher of modern languages. French he had spoken from his earliest youth, for it was better known in Piedmont in some ways even than Italian—a fact which aroused Alfieri's righteous indignation at a later date. He was also working hard at Spanish, studying our literature, and even acquiring some knowledge of Portuguese. In a work published in 1753¹ he points out Voltaire's misrepresentation of a passage of Camoens.

About this time Mrs. Lennox, who wrote "The Female Quixote," became anxious to learn enough Italian to enable her to translate the novels from which Shakespeare had taken the plots for his Italian plays. One evening her husband went down to the Orange Coffee-house in the Hay-market, and inquired whether any Italian there would be willing to assist in teaching his wife his own tongue in return for the excellent opportunity thus offered for learning English. Baretti gladly accepted the proposal, and Mrs. Lennox was so pleased with him that she soon introduced him to Dr. Johnson.²

He could hardly have been more fortunate in his introduction. The Doctor had the highest opinion

¹ "A Dissertation upon the Italian Poetry, in which are interspersed some Remarks on Mr. Voltaire's 'Essay on the Epic Poets,'" *ad fin.*

² *Eur. Mag.*, vol. xvi. p. 93.

of Mrs. Lennox. In the spring of 1751 he had given a famous all-night supper in honour of her first literary child, the “Life of Harriot Stuart,” at the Devil Tavern, by Temple Bar. The chief feature of the meal was a magnificent hot apple-pie stuck round with bay-leaves, because Mrs. Lennox was an authoress. He crowned her with laurels, after solemnly invoking the Muses in some rites of his own invention. “About five,” we are told, “Johnson’s face shone with meridian splendour, though his drink had been only lemonade.”¹ On another evening he returned in high spirits from a dinner at Mrs. Garrick’s with Miss Carter, Hannah More, and Fanny Burney, and said, “Three such women are not to be found, except Mrs. Lennox, who is superior to them all.”²

She must have been a remarkable woman in her way. Richardson admired her, Goldsmith wrote an epilogue to a comedy of hers, while Fielding describes her as “the inimitable and shamefully distress’d author of ‘The Female Quixote.’” She rewarded their friendship with most judicious flattery. Yet Mrs. Thrale says that no one liked her,³ and most of her sex agreed with her. “Though one of Johnson’s favourites,” says Miss Hawkins,⁴ “she was, I think, as little entitled to favour as most women.” In her house was a want

¹ Hill’s Boswell, i. 255, *note*.

² *Ibid.* iv. 275.

³ D’Arblay, Diary, i. 91.

⁴ “Memoirs,” p. 70.

of all order and method, all decorum of appearance and regularity of proceeding. The last time Miss Hawkins saw her was “in a court of justice, fairly pitted against a low female servant, who had endeavoured to obtain a compensation for ill words and hard blows received from her mistress.”

Baretti’s instruction resulted in “Shakespeare Illustrated ; or, the Novels and Histories on which the Plays are founded, collected, and translated.” It appeared in 1753-4, so we may presume that Baretti knew her as early as 1752. Needless to say, he quarrelled with her, and afterwards complained that she did not carry out her part of the bargain in teaching him English. The cause of the quarrel was that she objected to his once paying more attention to her child than to herself in company. Whereupon he retorted, “ You are a child in stature and a child in understanding.” Miss Hawkins adds that he was “generally provoking, where opportunity offered.” In this case he certainly was.

In giving evidence at Baretti’s trial, Johnson said that he believed he began to be acquainted with him about 1753 or 1754. In the latter year we find him writing to Mr. Chambers, of Lincoln College: “Mr. Baretti is well and Miss Williams.” This shows that Johnson was already intimate with Baretti, and was introducing him to his friends. In 1755 he dictated to him a copy of his

famous “Letter to Lord Chesterfield,” which he afterwards gave to Bennet Langton, and wished to be regarded as the authentic one.¹

In a note on the “Thrale-Johnson Letters”² Baretti says that “Johnson was a real *true-born Englishman*. He hated the Scotch, the French, the Dutch, the Hanoverians, and had the greatest contempt for all other European nations; such were his early prejudices, which he never conquered.” But in spite of this the two men struck up a friendship which lasted many years. They had much in common. They were typical of the literary men of the day, when dictionary-making and translation played an unusually prominent part, owing to the low ebb to which literature had then fallen in England. They were both men of learning, rather than original writers, yet both were as interested in their fellow-men as in their books, delighting in society and well calculated to shine in conversation. Both were warm-hearted and charitable, with plenty of sound common sense, but both were overbearing and rough in manner, though Baretti had none of the personal habits and peculiarities that made Johnson’s company so disagreeable to the fastidious. His manner is described as “apparently rough, but not unsocial,” whereas

¹ Hill’s Boswell, i. 260.

² i. 121.

³ *Eur. Mag.*, vol. xvi. p. 93.

Johnson has been well compared to Cincinnatus, a rustic Dictator of Letters who never quite laid aside the manners of the plough he had left.

Johnson, of course, towered head and shoulders over Baretti, both in intellect and character; and the “big man,” as Goldsmith called him, could say things that the little man could not without giving offence. No Mrs. Paradise ever turned her tea-urn over the Doctor. But the Doctor’s manner was not tolerated out of his own circle of devout adorers. Fanny Burney relates that when he was at Brighton with the Thrales and herself, he had made himself so unpopular that he was only invited out with them on one evening, much to his annoyance, and that people would not come to the house except when they knew he was out. Even she, with all her affection, complains of his conduct.¹

The friendship was an important one for Baretti. It not only improved his prospects in London, but it also had a real influence upon his mode of thought, as we shall see on his return to Italy.

Johnson [says Baretti²] is a dreadful old man,³ a giant both in mind and body, always absent-minded, fierce, touchy, dirty, with a number of unpleasant habits. His body is continually in

¹ D’Arblay, Diary, ii. 122.

² Letter to Amèdeo, London, January 1776.

³ “Vecchiaccio.”

motion while he is seated and he ruminates ceaselessly with his mouth like an ox ; but as he is rightly considered to possess more knowledge than any other man in the kingdom, he is feared and respected by every one, perhaps more than he is loved. Though he is a great critic in French, and knows almost as much Italian as I do, he cannot speak either language, but he talks Latin with all Cicero's fury.

This is the account by which Johnson is known to Italians, and it agrees substantially with the many English descriptions which we possess.

All our authorities agree that Johnson spoke Latin admirably ; but he had his own views on conversing with foreigners. In France he insisted on speaking Latin, for he held that a man should not let himself down by speaking a language which he speaks imperfectly. One day, when Sir Joshua Reynolds presented him to a distinguished Frenchman at the Royal Academy, he “would not deign to speak French, but talked Latin, though his Excellency did not understand it, owing, probably, to Johnson’s English pronunciation.” Yet on another occasion he insisted on speaking French to a Frenchman who spoke English, “because I think my French as good as his English.”¹

The great Doctor’s manner irritated Baretti. Boswell relates² that at a dinner he gave in his

¹ Hill’s Boswell, ii. 404.

² *Ibid.*, ii. 66.

rooms, the Earl of Eglinton expressed regret at Johnson's manner, and wished he had lived in more refined society. "No, no, my lord," said Signor Baretti. "Do with him what you would, he would always have been a bear." "True," answered the Earl, with a smile, "but he would have been a dancing bear."

Baretti must often have visited Johnson in his roomy garret in Gough Square, where the *Dictionary* was written. This was the place where Doctor Burney once found him with "five or six Greek folios, a deal writing-desk, and a chair and a half." Johnson was wonderfully skilful in manœuvring the three-legged chair. A gentleman who visited him while he was writing the "*Idlers*" in 1758 remarked that on rising "he would either hold it in his hand or place it with great composure against some support, taking no notice of its imperfection to his visitor." These were days of struggle for both men, and the hardships endured together made Johnson all the more anxious not to break with Baretti in later life, for he loved an old friend. Baretti has some stories of these early times.

One evening, when they had agreed to go to the tavern, a foreigner in the streets, by a specious tale of distress, emptied the Doctor's purse of the half-guinea it contained. They took their supper, however, as they had agreed, but when the reckon-

ing came, what was the Doctor's surprise upon his recollecting that his purse was totally exhausted ! Baretti had fortunately enough to answer the demand, and has often declared that it was impossible for him not to reverence a man who could give away all that he was worth, without recollecting his own distress.¹

Exactly a month before Baretti died, Malone heard the following story from him at Mr. Courtenay's :

Baretti used sometimes to walk with Johnson through the streets at night, and occasionally entered into conversation with the unfortunate women who frequent them, for the sake of hearing their stories. It was from a history of one of these, which a girl told under a tree in King's Bench Walk to Baretti and Johnson, that he formed the story of Misella in *The Rambler*.²

I am afraid Baretti was not strictly accurate in saying that he was with Johnson on this occasion, for Misella's story appeared in Nos. 170 and 171 of *The Rambler* in 1751, when Baretti had not yet made his acquaintance. Baretti's respect for strict truth, especially when dealing with the "eye of history," as Johnson called chronology, was never remarkable. On the same occasion Baretti gave some instances of Johnson's wonderful memory.

Unfortunately, we possess very few of Baretti's letters of this period. He tells us that his brothers

¹ *Gent. Mag.*, vol. lix. p. 570.

² Prior's Malone, p. 161.

pasted them all in a book, but on his return to Italy he found them so inaccurate that he destroyed most of them ; and he was ever afterwards particularly severe against travellers who had the impertinence to publish accounts of countries in which they had spent a few months at the outside. There is one, however, dated “London, 15th April, 1754,” to his old friend the Canonico Giuseppe Candido Agudio of Milan—“Calonaco,” as Baretti loves to call him in dialect. It refers to a portrait “which I have had done on enamel by a young gentleman called MacPherson, a Florentine by birth, but of Scotch extraction, who was in Italy three or four years ago,” and had met Agudio there. It was intended for a collection of heads of authors his friend was then making. “I advise you,” he continues, “if you mean to put it among all the literary people you have collected, to see that I am properly described underneath it as ‘cook or sweeper to Parnassus’ to prevent mistakes.” The fact of its being a miniature must account for his apparent beauty. It is considered a good likeness, but “you may readily believe that I am not really quite as good-looking as the portrait,” now that he is beginning to show signs of age.

I live very quietly, for peace of mind has long been my chief, if not my only object. My English friends are cudgelling their brains more than I am myself as to how they can put me in the way

of making some sort of a fortune, suggesting first one thing and then another. Now that I know English as well as Italian they hope to find me some work that will prove really profitable. . . . I do not have much to do with poetry now, and a gloomy meditation on death by Sherlock or Young, or a cold philosophical moral discourse by Tillotson or Johnson, begin to be more to my liking, truth to tell, than all the nonsense of Petrarch or Berni.

He has few Italian friends, but a number of English ones, though as these latter are all about ten years older than himself—

our discussions are very grave and serious ; for if the Englishman is naturally grave and serious when young, think what a strange animal and how poisoned with Plato¹ he must be when he advances in years !

He asks for news of the Academy and of all his friends at Milan, where he has heard—though he is not sure from whom—that the ladies are beginning to learn English. If this is true, he thinks he might turn an honest penny by sending out a parcel of selected English books, which he could easily get cheap, and “especially as many copies as I want of an English Dictionary, which is already printed, and which will put our Crusca and the French Dictionary of the Academy and all other dictionaries that have hitherto appeared into the shade, for the excellence of the method

¹ “Implatonito”—one of Baretti’s admirable, specially coined words.

used in compiling it." This is, of course, Johnson's Dictionary, which was not, however, published till a year after this letter was written. In Italy it will cost fourteen or fifteen sequins (about seven guineas). He would like to place a few copies in Milan, as he has already arranged to do in other towns.

He then tells his friend that he has been at death's door, and is even now only a poor convalescent, just able to stand, who will not be allowed to leave the house for three or four days at least. What Dr. Logey will say if he finds that he has written this letter, he hardly ventures to think.

Considering the length of the letter, however, we may well suspect Baretti of a little exaggeration. He is one of those people who never have an illness which is not the worst of its kind that any one ever had, and which must have killed them but for their wonderful constitutions.

The next letter is dated August 8 of the same year, and is also to the "Calonaco." There is a pathetic touch of home-sickness about it: Oh, what boundless joy your letter gave me! In the presence of MacPherson and Zuccarelli, the painter, "I tore it open and read it in loud, stentorian tones, spluttering with pleasure every moment and picking up my glasses, which fell off my nose at least a dozen times, so heartily did I laugh."

Here we may remark that in later years, on his return from his visit home, Baretti always wore his glasses on a broad, black ribbon round his neck. Hence his Italian friends nicknamed him the “Cavaliere del Ordine del Laccio.”

Thanks to the opera, Italian is becoming more and more necessary ; and in England, alas ! where life is so dear, he can think of nothing but making money.

This temperate climate was all that was needed to cool my fiery blood, and though my character has not changed, the cider and the beer have calmed me to such a degree that I hope that in a year or two I shall never laugh, except when I am absolutely forced to do so.

I am just back from the country, where I have been spending two months with a gentleman of quality, who, after reading my English Dissertation upon Dante [*i.e.* “The Dissertation upon the Italian Poets,” published in the previous year], sent his chaplain to London to inquire about the author, bidding him fetch me to him by fair means or by foul, as he had something to tell me. So I went, and when I got there, he informed me that he had been working for twenty years at a translation of Ariosto into “ottava rima.” He had just finished it, but did not dare publish it till it had been seen by some one like myself. We spent forty days comparing it with the original, working like niggers, in order to perfect it as much as possible ; but on the first day after my arrival, when we had scarcely read fifty stanzas, he was so

pleased with my remarks and the corrections I suggested, that he gave me a watch worth some forty guineas, according to what the watchmakers tell me here. When I left, he paid for my journey both ways, and gave me a forty-guinea note, which was most welcome. But this is not all. He has even presented me with a house and garden adjoining his park for my whole life, and has duly given orders that I am to be provided with all I may require when I go there alone or with my friends, and I am to have full power to kill as many deer as I may need for my table. He also very nearly saddled me with a wife ; but this gift I firmly refused, for many reasons. The lady, though a relative of his and personally all that could be desired, was hardly the one to promote my interests. If I am to be caught, I want money by the sack, not doled out in purses. In short, the good man is so possessed by Ariosto¹ and finds me such an agreeable companion in his hobby,² that he is overjoyed at having made my acquaintance, and has completely lost his head, insisting on doing me every good turn in his power. In a few days his translation will be printed, with the original beside it and a Preface of mine in English ; and if all goes well, I am to have the chief share of the profits, for this fine gentleman³ only desires the glory for himself. When I left his delightful, lonely villa, he himself and his daughter and the lady who was to have been my wife and all the family wept, if you please, like children, so that I

¹ "Ariostito."

² "Ariostevole." Both these are words coined by Baretti.

³ "Signoraccio."

was forced to weep too, for kinder, more courteous, more lovable people are not to be found on this earth, except in Milan. If I had not solemnly promised to come back and see them at Christmas, they would have been in despair. But I made the printing of the translation my excuse for escaping, as the question of the wife made me nervous, and I was afraid I might rush into her arms if I stayed any longer.

Did Baretti return at Christmas or did he fear to trust himself in such dangerous company? We cannot say, for we hear no more of the gentleman, the house, or even of the wife. In the following year a translation of Ariosto in "ottava rima," with the text beside it, in parallel columns, did actually appear; but the Preface was not by Baretti, but by Temple H. Croker, who apparently claimed the translation too, though in a later edition this is ascribed to Mr. Huggins. Perhaps the author thought that a translation of "Ariosto" appearing under the name of Huggins might not be very convincing. Hoole's version soon afterwards superseded it altogether. But it was certainly Huggins's work that Baretti revised, and he gives a very different version of one part of the story.

He abuses Baretti infernally, and says that he one day lent Baretti a *gold* watch, and could never get it afterwards; that after many excuses Baretti skulked, and then got *Johnson* to write

to Mr. Huggins a suppliant letter ; that the letter stopped Huggins awhile, while Baretti got a *protection* from the Sardinian ambassador ; and that, at last, with great difficulty, the watch was got from a pawnbroker's, to whom Baretti had sold it. What a strange story, and how difficult to believe ! . . . To crown all, he says that Baretti wanted to poison Croker.¹

This I flatly decline to believe. Johnson would never have tolerated a thief as a friend for a moment. Baretti, in fact, gives us his own explanation of the incident, and was fond of telling the story of “the gentleman who lends watches.” A few months after giving the present, he, having heard— from one of his huntsmen, who wanted me out of his way for a certain purpose of his own, that I had spoken with contempt of some of his verses, grew at once so angry as to send for the watch back, on the pretence that he had only lent it me ; with which request I instantly complied, giving him, however, such a hint in my answer, as made him mind the does in his park a little better than he had done before, and grow ashamed of his ready crediting the huntsman's tale.²

But the incident explains a characteristic sentence in a letter from Johnson to Baretti :

I know not whether I have not sent you word that Huggins and Richardson are both dead.

¹ Letter from Dr. Warton to his brother, April 28, 1755, in Croker's *Boswell* (1875), p. 129.

² “Tolondron,” p. 33.

When we see our enemies and friends gliding away before us, let us not forget that we are subject to the general law of mortality, and shall soon be where our doom will be fixed for ever.¹

Johnson had doubtless introduced Baretti to Richardson soon after making his acquaintance.

In 1755 he translated into Italian Williams's "Attempt to ascertain the Longitude at Sea." Zachariah Williams, then dead, was the father of the blind Miss Williams who presided over Johnson's strange menagerie and kept house for him for so many years. The account was written by Johnson, who had a high opinion of Williams's ability, and the Italian version is printed on the opposite page. Johnson was very particular to ensure this book being placed in the Bodleian, and himself entered it in the catalogue. This is the account Johnson gave Mrs. Thrale of the strange household that lived on his charity: "Williams hates everybody; Levett hates Desmoulins, and does not love Williams; Desmoulins hates them both; Poll [Carmichael] loves none of them." Miss Williams's infirmity made it difficult for her to carry out her duties, and her methods were a sore trial to the Doctor's more squeamish guests. Baretti scribbled in one of his spiteful little notes²: "I dined with Dr. Johnson as seldom as I could, though often scolded for it; but I

¹ December 21, 1762.

² On Thrale-Johnson Letters, ii. 99.

hated to see the victuals pawed by poor Miss Williams, that would often carve, though stone-blind." Boswell says she was very peevish, and admired Johnson's goodness to her. Out of pity for her infirmity he often took her to houses where her table manners hardly fitted her to go, in order to find her amusement. He found real pleasure in her society. On her death he wrote to Mrs. Montagu¹: "Thirty years and more she has been my companion, and her death has left me very desolate."

In 1755 Johnson writes to Warton at Oxford: "Baretti is about a work for which he is in great want of *Crescimbeni*,² which you may have again when you please." The work referred to must be "The Italian Library, containing an account of the Lives and Works of the most valuable Authors of Italy," published in 1757.

Filippo seems now to have had some idea of visiting his brother in London, and received the following interesting letter about his plan:

LONDON, September 23, 1757.

MY DEAREST FILIPPO,—

Signor Capitolo will be heartily welcome in my house, and if two months are not enough, then for two hundred. As long as you stay I shall do my best to entertain you both. Tell him to be sure and provide himself with plenty

¹ Croker's Boswell, p. 739.

² i.e. his "L' istoria della volgar poesia."

of money for the journey and leave the question of lodgings to me, provided there is no objection to his sharing a bed with you, for I can only give you a bed between you in my small establishment ; but I shall expressly make it as large as the one in which Berni used to sleep¹ when the Fairy of the Lake kept him her prisoner.

Before you start, please allow me to make a few suggestions which may be of use to you. The first is that you spend as little as possible on the journey, going by carriage from Turin to Lyons and not by post, for in winter the post does not go much faster than a carriage, as Savoy is so rough. At Lyons you should take the coach for Paris, and at Paris the one for Brussels. From Brussels you could go in some public conveyance to Holland ; the road to Ostend is too confusing. At Helvoetsluice you must take the packet for Harwich, where, on your arrival, you will find Signor Giuseppe Baretti, who will carry you off in triumph to London. Don't trouble to bring more than one trunk between you, with a dozen shirts each, a travelling coat and two good coats of smooth cloth without much lace, except on the waist-coats,² for on these it does not matter if the lace is even rich. If the coats were much laced, you would be obliged to have a carriage, unless you wanted to appear ridiculous. Bring a good supply of silk stockings and scarves, so as not to have to buy them here, where every-

¹ The mattresses of this famous bed measured three ells in every direction. It was large enough for six, but the poet slept there alone in a perfect sea of pleasure. His food was only such as could be easily eaten. He never moved his body, and hardly spoke for fear of tiring his tongue. Eating and sleeping were his only occupations.

² In the first edition of the Dictionary Baretti spells it "waste-coat.

thing costs the eyes of the head ; and remember to leave the long tails to your wigs¹ behind you and the high wooden heels on your shoes, if you do not want the English boys to run after you in the streets. Should you come in winter, don't bring muffs ; here in England you would only be laughed at and jeered at for them. If you intend to come in summer and not in winter, bring neither silk nor camlet² coats, for here they are not necessary, even in the months of July and August. Coats must always be either of cloth or of velvet.

I remember you were very ill in the Mediterranean during the few hours you were on it, so probably the ocean will make you ten times worse, for it is something much more formidable than that little lake or river of ours, which is always quiet and calm by comparison. When you are on the packet, mind you pluck up heart and don't be afraid. Sea-sickness is over the moment you get on shore or very shortly afterwards, and if you complain and give way to it, you only make matters worse and amuse the sailors. Play the man and not the woman. Two, three, or even four days are soon over. A little suffering, bravely borne, is worth enduring to see your brother and England.

I suppose you will start about the end of December and reach here about the middle of February. This would suit me admirably, for

¹ The “bag” or “ornamental purse of silk tied to men’s hair,” as Johnson defines it, then usual on the Continent, but not much worn in England at this date.

² A material “now made of wool and silk” (Johnson).

by that time I hope to have won a case which is now pending for £70, and to have handled a good part of the money for the dictionary on which I am now at work. But I warn you that, while you are here, I shall expect you to conform to my sober and regular way of life, going to bed at my hours and getting up at my hours, forgetting there is such a thing as gambling and not devoting too much attention to certain English votaries of Venus. . . . No pranks here, please. This advice is meant for Capitolo, not for you. You are held fast in the bonds of matrimony, and I know that all the gold in Peru would not induce you to break a single link in the chain. I shall expect you both to agree to live according to my rules, especially as I hope to have a number of pupils this winter and I shall have to be punctual with them, if I am to make an honest living and be in a position to pass the afternoon comfortably with you when my morning duties are over and I have done enough work to keep our heads above water.

That will do for your journey for the present; we can discuss it in further letters, if Signor Capitolo decides wisely and is willing to throw away the three or even four hundred sequins the trip will cost him.¹ I shall only urge you now not to burden yourselves with a servant. This would only involve great useless expense. . . .

Thank my Countess-mother for drinking my health at her vineyard, where I picture her to myself as leading a lonely life, thinking only of how to pass her years of maturity as a quiet,

¹ Roughly, £140 to £190.

steady, twice-widowed lady should, realising at last the vanity of this poor world, with all the peace and good sense that become a matron of forty. I need not be over-anxious for news of Paolino¹ from you, for his lordship, forgetting the respect and devotion due to me, his elder brother, has never deigned to send me a line of good wishes, or give me an account of his studies, occupations, and ambitions since growing up. This leads me to think him conceited and wanting in affection. Still less do I desire news of Giovanna,² as I cannot forget the wrong she did me in having a stupid and disgusting letter written me by an infamous renegade like Cori. This I shall not easily forgive: it was too shameful and undeserved after the unbroken affection I have shown towards her for twenty years and more.

Filippo never came to London after all, though his friend Capitolo did, and became a source of constant trouble and annoyance to Baretti.

His friends' efforts to find an important piece of work for Baretti to do now began to bear fruit. No one could help admiring the pluck with which he worked at the various languages and literatures of Europe, and the ability with which he had mastered our own; and by 1757 he had already undertaken to revise Altieri's English

¹ His stepmother's son by his father. Paolino was Sardinian Consul at Leghorn about 1770, and afterwards at Malta.

² Wife of his brother Amedeo.

and Italian Dictionary for a number of booksellers. The English, he tells us¹—

use few words in settling matters of business, as I have myself found on several occasions. I shall always remember how, when I undertook to correct and enlarge Altieri's Dictionary for eight different booksellers, I asked them point-blank for two hundred guineas. A glass of wine and a shake of the hand decided the matter in less time than it takes me to write it.

The agreement was probably concluded at the Chapter Coffee-house, where the booksellers usually met and made their bargains, with the help of the indispensable bottle.

In this year appeared his “*Italian Library*,” a list of the chief Italian writers, with a Preface on the historical development of the Tuscan tongue—the most important work Baretti had yet published in English.

In June 1758 he went to Oxford with the following introduction from Dr. Johnson:

TO REV. MR. THOMAS WARTON.

You will receive this by Mr. Baretti, a gentleman particularly entitled to the notice and kindness of the Professor of poesy. He has time but for a short stay, and will be glad to have it filled up with as much as he can hear and see.

Warton was at that time Professor of Poetry at Oxford.

¹ “*Lettere familiari*,” vi.

This must have been only one of many trips made by Baretti in England. He had a passion for seeing all that there was to see, and spent much of his money in post-chaise hire in travelling through the country¹—more, indeed, than he could afford. This love of driving he shared with Johnson, who once said to Boswell: “If I had no duties, I would spend my life in driving briskly in a post-chaise with a pretty woman ; but she should be one who could understand me and would add something to the conversation.”² Baretti would have been the last man to refuse such a companion.

As we have already seen, Baretti had a genuine admiration for Duke Amedeo of Savoy, whom he always regarded, or affected to regard, as a personal friend. In 1758 he actually sent Pitt a memorial in which he offered, in return for a large subsidy and the conquest of the Milanese, to bring Charles Emmanuel III. into the league against Austria. No wonder Count Viry, Sardinian Minister in London, to whom he refers contemptuously in the memorial, wrote to his Sovereign that his brain was a little turned ; and that Charles Emmanuel replied, “ You must certainly have your mind as deranged as that fellow to propose to take a step so rash and imprudent as he suggests.”³

¹ *Eur. Mag.*, vol. xvi. p. 93.

² Hill’s *Boswell*, iii. 162.

³ Piccioni, “*Studi e ricerche*,” p. 414.

Baretti was not likely to fail in life from a too modest idea of his own importance.

By this time Baretti must have gradually made the acquaintance of most of Johnson's friends. The Literary Club was not yet founded, but most of its future members were in London. Boswell, however, the greatest among the host of diarists and memoir-writers who have combined to make the literary and social history of England at the end of the eighteenth century so fascinating, did not make the acquaintance of his illustrious friend till Baretti was again in Italy, so that we have not the details for the period that we have in later years. Baretti had met Reynolds, who was afterwards to offend old-fashioned gentlemen by living like a person of quality; and Garrick, Johnson's famous old pupil, whom the Doctor allowed no one to abuse but himself. At bottom, Johnson was not a little jealous of his success, and, above all, of his wealth; when contrasted with his own poverty, and liked to sneer at his profession; but he loved Davy dearly, and Cumberland saw him bathed in tears at the foot of Shakespeare's monument in the Abbey at his funeral.

Perhaps we may be allowed to linger a little over two of the younger members of the set, Bennet Langton and Topham Beauclerk,¹ both

¹ Cp. Hill's "Dr. Johnson, his Friends and his Critics."

of them well known to Baretti, the latter particularly so. Johnson watched over them while undergraduates at Oxford, where they became firm friends, though utterly unlike in character. They were both men of position and means. Beauclerk was one of the wildest young men of his day—his mind all virtue, his body all vice, as Johnson once told him; whereas of Langton he said, “I know not who will go to Heaven if Langton does not.” Langton was a brilliant Greek scholar, with a wonderful memory and an endless supply of good stories: he was loved by Johnson as a son. He was enormously tall, which gave point to the Doctor’s nickname for him—Lanky. Miss Hawkins tells us that he once kept Garrick waiting for dinner, which made him very peevish. When he entered the room, Garrick, who was not a giant, got on a chair to listen to him, thus venting his peevishness on Langton’s height. Langton took it very coolly, but when Garrick descended Langton went down on his knees to shake hands with him. On another occasion Lady Di Beauclerk, his friend’s wife, complained of his not calling upon her when he was acting as a militia officer in the country, saying that he had but to lie down and “his feet had been in London and his head might have been here *codem die*.” He was a good officer, but was always in financial difficulties,

telling his father once that “he had no turn for economy,” whereupon Johnson observed that a thief might as well say he had no turn for honesty. Langton was a devoted father, teaching his children himself. His sons were not unworthy of their parent, for they used to amuse the Parisians by holding up their arms to let them pass underneath.

Beauclerk was attracted to Langton by his scholarship. He was born a member of the great world, but, like Horace Walpole and many others, both before and since, he found his abilities required more solid intellectual food than he could find there, and he spent much time with the members of the Literary Club. Johnson had a warm affection for him. According to Boswell, his likeness to Charles II., from whom he was descended through Nell Gwyn, made “Beau” especially dear to the Doctor’s Tory heart. He was certainly ruder to Johnson than any others among his friends would have dared to be. He was a wonderful conversationalist, and always showed his respect for Johnson by avoiding loose talk in his presence.

These two young men once knocked Johnson up at three in the morning to come out with them. “What, is it you, you dogs?” he called from the window. “I’ll have a frisk with you.” They went and brewed punch, then visited Covent

Garden, where Johnson helped the fruit-sellers to lift their baskets, till their astonishment at his appearance forced him to desist. They ended up on the river, where Langton drew down the Doctor's wrath by being obliged to leave "his social friends and go and sit with a set of un-ideal girls" for breakfast. Beau and Johnson spent the rest of the day together.

Baretti was the only foreigner who really became intimate with this brilliant circle, except, perhaps, General Paoli, who was indeed a member of the Literary Club, but never became Anglicised like Baretti, and never spoke English even moderately well ; and the fact that they welcomed Baretti among them is a high compliment not merely to his character and abilities, but to his power of adapting himself to other ways of life than his own. He was fortunate in coming to England at such a time, and he knew how to use the advantages placed in his way. We learn more details of his life in England in later years, when we have the various diaries to which to refer.

In 1760 appeared the "Dictionary of the English and Italian Languages," which has not been altogether superseded, even at the present day. Nominally, it was a correction of Altieri's work, but Baretti was justified in claiming it as his own, since it "contains above ten thousand words or significations of words not to be found

in his." He was eminently suited for the task, owing to his wonderful memory and the richness of his vocabulary in both languages. "He was certainly a man of extraordinary talents," says Malone, "and perhaps no one ever made himself so completely master of a foreign language as he did of English." He prefixed short grammars to both volumes—an Italian grammar for Englishmen and an English grammar for Italians—taking as his guides "that of Samuel Johnson prefixed to his Dictionary, and that of Buonmattei." The Dedication to "Don Felix, Marquis of Abreu, and Bertodano, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary from His Catholick Majesty to the King of Great Britain," was written by Johnson, and is dated London, January 12, 1760. The success of the book was instantaneous, and the booksellers for whom he had worked "soon agreed unanimously to give me a good additional present, as they were convinced that I had done something more to the Dictionary than another man would have done."¹

Baretti now possessed a considerable knowledge of our literature, which was then very little read in Italy; and his admiration for it was real and lasting. He was the first Italian to know and appreciate us before Count Alfieri. In the Italian Preface to the Dictionary he speaks at some

¹ "Lettere familiari," vi.

length of our writers in the appallingly long sentences which were fashionable in his day, and which are so unlike the natural, easy style of his letters. After referring to our prose-writers, he continues :

But how much paper should I be obliged to blot before I could give you the merest sketch of a Shakespeare, a Spenser, a Milton, a Dryden, and all the other inspired poets, who have united, in a greater or less degree, the directness of Greek poetry with the beauty of the Latins, the charm of the Italians and the precision of the French, together with the strength and the lightness of Saxony and of Gaul, and have thus produced a class of poetic ideas which we sons of Latium, imitators of the Achæans of old, have not yet learnt to appreciate as we ought. We are perfectly satisfied with our poets if they mould their ideas and their methods carefully and exactly upon Greek lines. This is all too true. We hardly realise that these Islanders, bold and free, have welded together the imagination of the North and the East with wonderful skill, and have built up a rare poetry, to which the verse-writers of the Seine and the Arno would give a very high place, had they but the wit to study it and to learn it. Why cannot I translate even a few scenes of Shakespeare or a single passage of Milton, and carefully reproduce the lofty style, the boldness, the noble fire and rush of the originals? Whether it be that I have not skill enough in our native tongue, or that this tongue is lacking in the sinew and the

muscle that is needed, I would not dare run the risk. I see the fruit upon the tree, and I see that the fruit is golden and that it would tempt any man ; but the dread Genius of the North watches over me and refuses to allow me to stretch out my eager hands, even to pluck a basketful, so that when I return home my countrymen must be content with a few leaves, which I have gathered by hard toil from the ground, and stored away diligently among the few gifts of poesy that I hope to offer them when the time comes.

CHAPTER V

THE JOURNEY FROM LONDON TO GENOA

1760

Now that his dictionary was published, Baretti had a considerable sum of money in hand, and the success of his work had gained him a real reputation in England. He had always regarded his stay in this country as merely temporary, and was determined to go back to Italy as soon as he felt that he could do so with any prospect of success. With his thorough knowledge of English, of which the dictionary was a proof, as well as some acquaintance with Spanish, to say nothing of his French, he felt at last that he might safely return home, hoping that the storm raised by his earlier indiscretions would have blown over, and that, with his new accomplishments, he would be able to obtain employment in Piedmont.

Fortune favoured him. Johnson had known Lord Southwell for some years, and now learnt that one of the family, Edward Southwell, was to take the usual continental tour of the period, and that some one was required to conduct him through

Spain as far as Venice. It is possible that the arrangements were made without Johnson's aid, but not very probable. However that may be, Baretti gladly availed himself of the opportunity. If we can believe Badini's attack,¹ he received £200 for taking charge of the Signor Edoardo; but this was very probably an exaggerated rumour circulating among the Italian colony in London.

Baretti himself thought that he was returning home for good.

Farewell, beautiful England [he wrote²]; farewell, home of virtue; farewell, sink of vice. I leave thee and depart from thy shores, perhaps for ever, and with little regret, seeing that I am to meet my beloved brothers once again after a separation all too long. Willingly do I forget all the sufferings I have endured in thee for so many years; but I shall not forget the great kindness thou hast shown me, nor shall I ever cease to remember with gratitude all thy honoured sons who have helped and encouraged me in my hour of need.

It was Johnson who first suggested to Baretti that he should write an account of his travels, as he acknowledges in the Preface to his "Journey from London to Genoa." If the method adopted is a success—

I shall owe it in great part to my most reverend friend Dr. Samuel Johnson, who suggested it to

¹ "Il vero carattere di Giuseppe Baretti," p. 60.

² "Lettere familiari," i.

me, just as I was setting out on my first journey to Spain. It was he that exhorted me to write daily and with all possible minuteness ; it was he that first pointed out the topics which would most interest and most delight in a future publication. To his instructions I have kept as close as I was able.

We find Johnson repeating the advice in a letter of June 10, 1761 : “ I hope you take care to keep an exact journal, and to register all occurrences and observations ; for your friends here expect such a book of travels as has not often been seen.”

Like many indolent people, Johnson was most anxious to prevent other people from wasting their time, and he habitually suggested to every one he considered to possess the necessary intelligence that they should keep a diary—to Boswell, for instance, who was specially privileged and allowed to withdraw into remote corners of crowded drawing-rooms to note down the sage’s sayings, when he had not found his host’s wine too good to resist ; and to Mrs. Thrale.

As you have little to do [he writes to her on September 6, 1777], I suppose you are pretty diligent at the *Thraliana*. . . . Do not omit the practice of writing down the occurrences as they arise, of whatever kind, and be very punctual in annexing the dates. Chronology, you know, is the eye of history.

Johnson himself could only manage to keep the barest notes occasionally ; but we owe much to him for the diaries he induced others to keep. He was always interested in foreign travel, and saw that a good account of Spain was needed. Before Baretti's book appeared he had advised Boswell to visit that country.

We have two accounts of Baretti's journey—the “*Lettere familiari ai fratelli*” in Italian, and the English “*Journey from London to Genoa, through England, Portugal, Spain, and France.*” They differ considerably from each other. The Italian version is the original, and has a freshness and vividness that is not quite reproduced in the English, which did not appear till 1770, and was carefully edited. Signor Edoardo disappears, for obvious reasons, and most of the accounts of England and the English are omitted, while other matter is inserted more likely to interest our countrymen. I have, as a rule, followed the Italian version, as more likely to be correct, in making quotations.

He left London on August 14, 1760, with young Southwell, who is “learned beyond his age, and rather over-civil, as he has but lately quitted the college.” Considering with whom he was travelling, a little extra politeness cannot have been altogether a disadvantage. In the same coach were two charming English girls, Anne and

Helen Scot, travelling with their aunt. They made a very merry party, visiting Salisbury, Stonehenge, Honiton, and Exeter together. At Exeter the ladies left them, much to Baretti's grief, though not till after—

we had kissed each other good-bye all round, not with eyes perfectly dry, according to the custom in England, where kisses are not looked upon as anything shameful, as they are in Italy, when they are given and received in public and in moderation. What a ridiculous thing is kissing between men and men, or women and women! The English have twenty times more wit than you.

It is interesting to find a custom surviving till late into the eighteenth century which had so greatly increased the charm of our women in Erasmus's eyes.¹ It seems to have been peculiar to our island, and the Byzantine Chalcondyles, who came to England in 1400, when the Emperor Manuel visited Henry IV., turned it into such a scandalous charge against our mothers that we "may smile at the credulity or resent the injustice of the Greek" for his misrepresentation of this modest salute. It seems a pity that it should have been allowed to die out in these degenerate days.

Baretti passed some time in the neighbourhood of Plymouth, and saw all that there was to see, as

¹ "Epist. Fausto Andrelino."

he always did—even some mules, which he tells his brothers are “almost as rare as elephants” in England.

At Falmouth they embarked on the Lisbon packet, the *King George*. These packets were very fast boats, always kept in the pink of condition, and had orders to run from everything they saw—even from English men-of-war, which might send them with despatches to any part of the world, taking charge of their mails themselves, if they could catch them. They were well armed. On this journey they actually sighted what was thought to be a French boat, but quickly distanced her. As the balance of trade was at that time against Portugal, which imported a large quantity of English goods, there were heavy shipments of specie to England, and the Lisbon packets were consequently picked boats. The cost of a passage was four guineas to the Government and about six pounds to the captain. As the Government supplied the food, the captain must have found the business profitable.

Baretti had no love for the sea. He doubtless thought with Johnson that “no man will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into a jail; for being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being drowned”; and on another occasion he declared that “a man in a jail has more room, better food, and commonly

better company.”¹ He was dreadfully sea-sick at first, and writes pathetically of the want of sympathy shown him in his sufferings by the crew; and then he was dreadfully bored. This is how he describes a day: “ Portuguese book ; little lesson, book in hand, to Signor Edoardo, and without a book to a few curious sailors ; masts, cords, sails, heaving ocean, creaking, etc.” ; and then the “ coffin,” as he calls it, in his cabin. “ The sameness of it all positively kills me.” He would even welcome a chase by a Frenchman to break the monotony. The doctor entertained him with tales of his travels and by playing the bagpipes. The result, he says, was excellent, when we remember the dearth of musicians at sea nowadays, since the disappearance of the Sirens, the Nereids, etc. But he must indeed have been hard put to it, for he elsewhere speaks of the bagpipes as “ the most cursed musick in the world to my ear.”²

He worked hard at Portuguese on board, and wrote a number of those letters which contain a summary of his impressions of England. We may suspect that he would have given much for the company of the charming Misses Scot on board, as indeed he admits himself.

During the ten years he was in England, he tells us,³ “ I have not fallen really in love once,

¹ Hill’s *Boswell*, i. 349. ² Note on *Thrale-Johnson Letters*, i. 158.

³ “ *Lettere familiari*,” xv.

though, without boasting, I may say that I have been on intimate terms with several ladies worthy of the love of any man, not to mention an old fool like myself." But his blood has now cooled with advancing years, and he has had to work too hard to be able to indulge in frivolous amusements. Not that he avoided ladies' society—quite the contrary; for in England "the ladies are, as a rule, angels incarnate," and do not abuse the great freedom they enjoy, "behaving with more reserve and circumspection than those of Italy." In a mixed company he will stake the best tooth he has in his head that a woman in England is, as a rule, superior in "courtesy, in good sense, and in general information" to ten men out of twelve. The ladies of England cannot complain that Baretti failed to do them justice. For some of this praise they doubtless have to thank the charms of the Misses Scot, still fresh in his memory. In the twelfth letter he returns once more to his other favourite topic—the misery of the poor and the prevalence of vice in London; and English writers of the day fully bear out his statements.

In his sixth letter he gives a general summary of our national character, which ought to interest us, seeing that it has become the classical description of us in Italy, and that most Italians even to-day base their opinions of us upon it, when they have no other more direct source of information.

D'Ancona and Bacci, and most of the chief compilers of selections from Italian literature, reproduce it.

Every one there is convinced that England is the best country in the whole world. . . . But if we take away from the English their boundless prejudice in favour of their own country, their fierce hatred of the French and their unreasonable contempt for all other nations on earth, the English are by no means altogether bad. They are, as every one knows, brave and fearless, both by land and by sea; nor is it easy to find instances of English cowardice in history. The French have several times broken them and defeated them in battle, but I do not think they have ever driven them headlong before them in any of the numerous wars there have been between the two nations. Simplicity and benevolence are marked characteristics of the English. If they can do you a good turn, they do it generously, without boasting of it afterwards. Their humanity has been clearly proved during the present war, when a voluntary subscription was made by the whole nation to clothe the many thousands of their enemies who were kept prisoners in this island, and who, without these liberal contributions from all classes, would for the most part have died of cold last winter, which was very severe. What nation, ancient or modern, has ever given the world such an example of heroic charity? . . . The truth is that the English do their utmost to make money; but once they have made it, they spend it freely, and will give

it you, if you ask them for it. . . . When they are convinced that you are an honest man, whether you are a foreigner or one of themselves, they make a point of supporting you and advancing you. Noblemen in England are not proud and grasping, as they are in many parts of Italy.

In fact, they are quite unlike the Italian nobility.

From the way in which they treat their servants, you can see that they are more anxious to win their love than their respect. . . . You will find many of the English aristocracy highly cultivated men, and during all the years I have passed among them I have not found one who would not be ashamed of being grossly ignorant.

According to Baretti, this is far from being the case in his own country ; but in England he was not likely to come in contact with noblemen who were not highly cultivated.

In England the arts have been brought to a higher state of perfection than in any other modern country. With the exception of painting, sculpture, architecture, and music, in which the English, do what they will, cannot approach us, they surpass us and every other nation in everything else. . . . But I might as well try to drink up the Atlantic, which I am now crossing, as to enumerate the arts which the English have either invented or brought to perfection. What shall I say of their poetry, their astronomy, their metaphysics, and of all the sciences which separate man from the brute and bring him

nearer to the angels? What shall I say of the infinite charm and sweetness of manner of their ladies?—graceful, modest, generous, charitable, agreeable, lively, religious—God bless them every one, say I! . . . To sum up, a born Englishman, in comparison with a man of any other nation whatever, has certainly no cause to be ashamed of his country, in spite of the prevalence of corruption, especially in London, which is the centre of every vice and of every virtue.

When we remember that this was written for his own countrymen and not to tickle our national vanity, we may feel some satisfaction at the impression made by England as a whole upon Baretti.

In the “Journey from London to Genoa”¹ he observes that—

the lower classes in England make much too light of the higher, and seem to have no reverence for what in all countries is considered and termed the better sort. The English populace will . . . tumble a gentleman into the mud, or fling dirt at his coach, or break his windows, upon their coming to the knowledge that such a gentleman is not of the party which . . . some cause has made them espouse the day or the week before. The English populace will stop the vehicle of a lady going to a mask, and force her with a most arbitrary violence to uncover her face, that they may look at her.

The English [he says elsewhere²], who are at present the most active people that exists, stand,

¹ ii. 277.

² “Journey,” iii. 3.

of course, quite at the head of mankind. . . . But everybody can tell that they must continue to exert themselves with unremitting vigour if they will avoid retrogradation.

I have taken the following story from his *Travels*, as it seemed to me the best in the book and one that shows Baretti's descriptive powers at their best. It is given in his own English ; and though there are here and there a few phrases that strike one as a little foreign, it is an amazingly good piece of work for a man who did not come to this country till he was over thirty. No wonder Johnson wrote to him (June 10, 1761) :

Your English style continues in its purity and vigour. With vigour your genius will supply it ; but its purity must be continued by close attention. To use two languages familiarly and without contaminating one by the other is very difficult ; and to use more than two is hardly to be hoped.

Johnson corresponded affectionately with Baretti during his absence. Three of his letters—all that have been preserved—are given by Boswell, and are some of the best and most characteristic he ever wrote. They were evidently on terms of sincere friendship at this period.

ELVAS, September 22, 1760.¹

As I was walking and waiting for my supper, some young muletteers came out of the side-rooms. One of them began to tickle his guittar, and another produced a song to the tune. They had

¹ "Journey," i. 241.

scarcely gone on three minutes with their performance, when the sleepers started up, while more than thirty people came out of the side-rooms, and a dance was begun. A man cut a caper by way of reverence to a woman, and the woman advanced immediately to dance the *Fandango* with him. There is no possibility of conveying to you any just idea of their hilarity, nimbleness, and elasticity. There were four Spanish and six Portuguese females. Out of the ten I took only notice of three. One was a brownish girl called *Teresuela*, whom I soon found to be the best singer of them all. The other two were sisters; the younger so renowned in the towns for a beauty, that she goes under the appellation of *La bella Catalina*. The oldest is not so handsome, but has such eyes! What a pity the comparison of the stars is no more in fashion!

The dresses of the women were all gaudy, especially the Spanish, who are come from *Badajoz* with some male friends to see Elvas fair. I must repeat it, that I have seen various dances from *Parenzo* in *Istria* to *Derby* in *England*; but none of them is comparable to what I saw here to-night. It is true that their gestures and attitudes are sometimes not so composed as one could wish; yet, if I was possessed of the abilities of Martial, instead of running down the *Fandango* and the *Seguedilla*, which I suppose were the dances he satyrised, I would write a thousand epigrams in praise of them, of *Teresuela*, of *Catalina*, and most particularly of *Paolita*, who has those eyes I mentioned! O this *Paolita*!

.

I have slept but poorly for three nights together, and was so much tired with this day's journey, performed afoot for the greatest part, that I was just debating whether I should or not go supperless to bed. But this unexpected feast changed my thoughts instantly, and instead of going to rest I stayed there gazing with my whole soul absorbed in delight.

The fellows who but a moment before were sleeping on the floor, without the least ceremony, or the least shame of their rags, danced away with the gaudy, as well as with the dirty women (for some of them were dirty enough); nor did any of the company show the least partiality to age, to dress, or to beauty, but all seemed to dance, merely for dancing's sake. I was a little surprised to see a shabby rascal take up so clean a girl as *Teresuela*, who was the finest of them all, and look sweeter upon her than any *petit maître* would at *Paris* upon a rich and tender widow. This would not have been allowed in any of the countries I have visited, where the ill-dressed keep company with the ill-dressed, and the fine with the fine, without ever dreaming of such mixtures as are practised in this part of the world.

In the corner of the gallery is a large table. Upon the table the cloth was laid, and my supper placed. There I sat down to eat without ceremony or shame in my turn.¹

Having almost done, Batiste put before me a large English cake made by Madam Kelly.

¹ From the Italian "Lettere familiari" we learn that "il Signor Edoardo" was also present on this occasion.

This cake I cut up into slices, and placing them pyramidically upon a plate, I went to present it round to the ladies, paying them a Castilian compliment that I had been a quarter of an hour in composing. Each of them, with the most disembarrassed countenance, picked up her slice, some with a bow, some with a smile, and some with a kind word.

The cake being thus disposed, I turned to the gentlemen (muletteers, ass-drivers, and all), and, calling them *Fidalgo's* and *Caballero's*, invited them to drink the health of the *amables Baylarinas* (amiable she-dancers), which they all did with the noblest freedom and greatest alacrity; and much was the general joy encreased by this sudden piece of outlandish manners. Several of them, who till then had scarcely deigned to look on the *Estrangeiro*, or seemed afraid to speak to him, now shook him by the hand, and each had something to say to me either in Spanish or Portuguese.

To the ladies after the cake I ordered glasses of water, because I knew that to offer them wine would have spoiled all the good I had done, and the offer construed into a gross affront; in such esteem is sobriety among these people. One of them, who was with child, sent to ask a slice of the ham, and her example was followed by the rest.

About midnight the dance was interrupted by a bonfire which was out of the town in honour of the *Princess'* marriage. We all went to see it from a bastion; but to my great satisfaction the rain spoiled it, so that we came back to the *Estallage*, where the dance began again with

greater fury than before, and lasted two hours longer. *Catalina's* sister, together with the best eyes, had also the most pliant body, and the nimblest heels, and being willing (as her significant looks told me) to repay me my little civility to her company, danced a dance without a partner, and displayed so many graces in it that never was my poor heart in so imminent a danger.

In the Italian version Baretta says "he could have eaten and drunk her alive, especially when she fixed her eyes shyly on mine for a moment."

When she had done, I clapped hands with such violence, and was so powerfully seconded by *Batiste*, *Yago* and *Don Manuele*, that the spectators were forced out of their customary flegm on such occasions, and with a most formidable shout of applause gave her the reward she had so well deserved. A young *Fidalgo* took then her place, and displayed his surprising agility, clapping thumbs, cutting capers, and throwing his body into a thousand picturesque attitudes. *Teresuela* then gave us some Castilian songs, her voice so sweet, and her manner so easy, that it would have done honour to the best of our theatrical queens. Fair *Catalina* sang likewise, but not so well as her friend.

In order to get word to *Paolita*—

that I should be obliged to her if she would favour me with a copy of her sister's last song, . . . I had employed one of the company, who by his familiarity to her I judged a proper messenger. But,

brother, would'st thou not go to her, and talk to her thyself? No, I could not. Had that been feasible, I had not waited for your encouragement. In those regions the manners are different from those of England, France, and Italy; and I can assure you that I would have given I know not what for the satisfaction of interchanging a few words with *Paolita*, whose eyes in the fortieth year of my age I could hardly resist.

It was near three when an end was put to the feast, and each went to lie down on the ground. Yes, all on the ground, some on mats, some on straw-bags, some on the naked floor, all without taking off their clothes, *Teresuela*, *Catalina*, and her black-eyed sister not excepted. All on the ground after the manner of the golden age.

I was the only person that did not do like them. My spirits had been so raised by this unexpected pleasure, that having not the least inclination to sleep, instead of going to my couch I called for pen and ink, and have now been full three hours writing this account. It is broad day, and I am still here in this quaking gallery, which I expected every moment to go down; and it had been a singular adventure if the muletteers, ass-drivers, caleseiros, the brownish girl, fair *Catalina*, her sister, and every male and female there, had tumbled all in a confused heap into the story below.

It rains now very hard, and as everybody round me is asleep, I will go and try if I can get some rest. The next station to *Badajoz* is but three short leagues, and I don't care how late I set out this afternoon.

LETTER XXXVIII

It is lucky that I am going from these regions. Were I to make the least stay, I should infallibly go mad, though I am old enough to be wise. Yes ; was I to tarry here ever so short a time, my philosophy, which has bravely withstood for ten years the repeated hostilities of British beauty, my poor, my silly, my contemptible philosophy would surrender to a power I am ashamed to name. But let me follow the thread of my story with my usual method.

It was nine o'clock this morning when I had not yet closed my eyes. The sight of dancing and the hurry of writing had inflamed my mind too much. I got up, and went into the shaking gallery, where several of the men were eating salt meat and pickled olives with the four Spanish women. An odd breakfast, I thought. The women bowed and smiled as I entered, and the men invited me to do as they did, which I declined. People say that the Spaniards continually breakfast on chocolate. Perhaps they do when they are at home ; but here the general report was effectually contradicted.

After breakfast they had another touch at the *Fandango* in compliment to me, having seen how much I had been pleased with it : a piece of Spanish courtesy that should not pass unnoticed. But while some were thus dancing, others were shaving in the same room. This in other countries would be deemed an intolerable want of manners ; but here it is nothing. These people live truly *sans façon*, or, to say better, *à la Tartare*.

The short dancing being over, the women would

go to a mass, though it continued to rain hard. . . . I need not tell you, that during the night I looked rather too often at *Paolita's* eyes, or that she had given me clearly to understand several times that she was not displeased at the preference I gave her to the brownish *Teresuela*, and even to her own handsome sister ; and since I am about it, I may as well tell you that when we went to see the bonfire, somebody in the dark gave me a slight pinch in the arm, and ran her hand against mine.

Well, both men and women quitted the gallery and went to church. But they had scarcely reached the bottom of the stairs, when back returns *Paolita* to fetch a glove. The steps she mounted with such celerity, and stood before me so unexpectedly, that I almost lost my sight in the surprise. *Dios te dea mil años de bien, Estrangero*, said she, throwing up her veil and speaking in my ear. I had no other answer ready but a kiss on her right eye, and another on her left,¹ and before I could recover my thoughts, off she was flown.

She is gone ! and has left me, I cannot tell in what condition !

It is unnecessary to follow Baretti's journey in detail, since he has left us such an admirable account of it himself. He landed at Lisbon, went through to Madrid, then to Barcelona, then up through the Pyrenees into the south of France. On reaching Antibes they hired a feluca and coasted as far as Genoa, where the account ends.

¹ In the Italian he kissed her first on the lips.

CHAPTER VI

THE RETURN TO ITALY

1760—1764

BARETTI reached Genoa on November 18 and hastened to Turin with his charge, where he doubtless received a genuine, demonstrative Italian welcome from his brothers, which would appeal to him all the more strongly after the comparative coldness and self-restraint shown on similar occasions in England. Having spent a few days at home, he hastened on to Milan and then to Venice, where he finally parted from Signor Edoardo. Johnson wrote to him :

By conducting Mr. Southwell to Venice, you fulfilled, I know, the original contract ; yet I would wish you not wholly to lose him from your notice, but to recommend him to such acquaintance as may best secure him from suffering by his own follies, and to take such general care both of his safety and his interest as may come within your power. His relations will thank you for any such gratuitous attention : at least they will not blame you for any evil that may happen, whether they thank you or not for any good.

From this it would seem that Johnson was particularly interested in young Southwell.

On his way back from Venice he stopped at Mantua and made the acquaintance of Greppi, Tanzi's friend, and then hastened on to Milan. There he was introduced to Count Firmian, who had come to Milan on June 15, 1759, as Minister Plenipotentiary, and posed as a patron of art and letters. But his patronage did not go very far. He gave occasional assemblies, to which men of learning were invited, and followed the prevailing fashion in forming an art-gallery and a library. Baretti passed some happy months in Milan, enjoying himself thoroughly among his old friends, and hoping for the employment he had long sought for in vain at home; and here he must have received the first of Johnson's letters, from which I give one or two extracts.

To MR. JOSEPH BARETTI AT MILAN

LONDON, *June* 10th, 1761.

. . . I have risen and lain down, talked and mused, while you have roved over a considerable part of Europe; yet I have not envied my Baretti any of his pleasures, though, perhaps, I have envied others his company: and I am glad to have other nations made acquainted with the character of the English, by a traveller who has so nicely inspected our manners, and so successfully studied our literature. . . .

I know not whether I can heartily rejoice at

the kind reception which you have found, or at the popularity to which you are exalted. I am willing that your merit should be distinguished; but cannot wish that your affections may be gained. I would have you happy wherever you are: yet I would have you wish to return to England. If ever you visit us again, you will find the kindness of your friends undiminished. To tell you how many inquiries are made after you, would be tedious, or if not tedious, would be vain; because you may be told in a very few words, that all who knew you wish you well; and that all that you embraced at your departure, will caress you at your return: therefore do not let Italian academicians nor Italian ladies drive us from your thoughts. You may find among us what you will leave behind, soft smiles and easy sonnets. Yet I shall not wonder if all our invitations should be rejected: for there is a pleasure in being considerable at home, which is not easily resisted.

At least, you will know by my letters [he adds], whatever else they may have or want, that I continue to be your most affectionate friend,

SAM. JOHNSON.

Baretti now made the acquaintance of Parini, author of the famous “Giorno,” who had been introduced to the *Trasformati* by Passeroni, as we have already seen; and in the autumn of 1761 he went with Bicetti, Parini, Fuentes, Tanzi, Balestrieri, Passeroni—all his friends of the *Trasformati*, in fact—to Count Imbonati’s beautiful villa at Cavallasca, near Lake Como. The “*villeggiatura*,” or annual

country holiday, was eminently characteristic of the period, and the reckless extravagance, often ending in complete ruin, to which it gave rise is a favourite theme for the satirists of the time. But the Count was well off, and his villa a large one, boasting sixteen bedrooms. No more ideally beautiful spot could be found for a holiday than the neighbourhood of Como, and a merry one it must have been with a party so lively and so congenial. How Baretti must have revelled in it all—the glorious blue of the sky, the blazing sunshine, and the luxuriant growth of the trees and flowers—after his long absence !

Think of the happy life we lead [he writes¹] in a place so perfect and in such good company ! If only the whole year were autumn and we could spend it all here, we might forget that we were mortal ! Songs, day-dreams, poetry, good food, choice wines, walks and strolls with fun and laughter follow one upon the other from cock-crow till dead of night. Let the English, the French, the Austrians, the Prussians, and the Muscovites kill each other to their heart's content : we shall not care a fig.

But he had not been idle all this time. He was at work upon the account of his journey, and by the beginning of 1762 the four volumes were ready, revised and licensed for the press. In the summer the first volume appeared and the second

¹ To Filippo November 10, 1761.

was printing ; but the Portuguese Minister, Count Frayre d'Andrada, took offence at what was said of the rudeness and want of hospitality shown by the lower orders in Portugal, and lodged a complaint with Count Firmian, who found himself obliged to stop the further publication of the work.

Baretti was bitterly disappointed. He has left us his version of what happened in a letter to his brother Amedeo, of October 26, 1762. He begins by declaring that it is not true that he has lost Firmian's favour.

He has not kept the promise he so often made and repeated to me [of giving him employment], but that is because, being naturally indolent and timid, he has yielded to his fear of the very serious opposition made to his wishes in Vienna. His unexpected favour raised me so high as to give rise to not a little jealousy on my account, which was only to be expected ; and all who were jealous of me or were absurdly afraid that, by becoming his favourite, I might supplant them and prevent them from realising their aspirations to the full, not only rejoice at my fall, but, quite naturally, abuse me. . . . But who can stay an envious tongue ? When I had lost all hope of the post promised me, I thought of printing my Travels, on the chance of making a few thousand francs out of them. But in these Travels, like every other writer in the world, I have abused the Portuguese people, and the Plenipotentiary, after

reading the first few pages of the second volume, which he was most anxious to see in print, became possessed with the idea that the book might give offence to the Portuguese court and, under existing circumstances, be looked upon as Jesuitical,

since the Jesuits had recently been expelled from Portugal. He therefore stopped the printing, but paid all the expenses to which Baretti had been put, which shows at least that he treated him with some generosity.

But it is perfectly clear that Baretti was no longer in Firmian's good graces. He must have written as much to Johnson, as we gather from his answer of December 21, 1762 :

I am sorry for your disappointment, with which you seem more touched than I should expect a man of your resolution and experience to have been, did I not know that general truths are seldom applied to particular occasions; and that the fallacy of our self-love extends itself as wide as our interest or affections. Every man believes that mistresses are unfaithful, and patrons capricious; but he excepts his own mistress, and his own patron. . . .

Do not let such evils overwhelm you as thousands have suffered, and thousands have surmounted; but turn your thoughts with vigour to some other plan of life, and keep always in your mind, that, with due submission to Providence, a man of genius has been seldom ruined but by himself. Your Patron's weakness or insensibility

will finally do you little hurt, if he is not assisted by your own passions. Of your love I know not the propriety, nor can estimate the power ; but in love, as in every other passion of which hope is the essence, we ought always to remember the uncertainty of events. There is, indeed, nothing that so much seduces reason from vigilance, as the thought of passing life with an amiable woman ; and if all would happen that a lover fancies, I know not what other terrestrial happiness would deserve pursuit. But love and marriage are different states. Those who are to suffer the evils together, and to suffer them for the sake of one another, soon lose that tenderness of look, and that benevolence of mind, which arose from the participation of unmixed pleasure and successive amusement. . . . I do not, however, pretend to have discovered that life has anything more to be desired than a prudent and virtuous marriage ; therefore know not what counsel to give you.

If you can quit your imagination of love and greatness, and leave your hopes of preferment and bridal raptures to try once more the fortune of literature and industry, the way through France is now open. . . . For your part, you will find your old friends willing to receive you."

Never did the sage deliver himself of a more characteristic utterance. Truly, "his trade was wisdom," as Baretti put it.

On his return to Milan Baretti had once more fallen in love, and was expecting to make a

happy marriage; but the withdrawal of Count Firmian's favour, and the consequent hopelessness of permanent employment at home, had shattered all these plans. He was too sensible, and knew himself and the world too well, to think of marrying until he felt he possessed a safe competence. When he returned to Italy in 1770, he tells his friend Carcano¹ that he does not mean to come to Milan. Travelling is expensive, and "I have other reasons which I prefer not to put on paper"; and elsewhere he says that he has no intention of going there to behave like a raw boy among the ladies. We do not know who the lady in question was, but it must have been of her that he was thinking when he wrote² that he had only seen—

one single woman whom I would gladly have made my wife, had I been able; and yet she was neither particularly young nor particularly beautiful: but I would have taken her for my wife in preference to any other member of her sex, though I was not in the least in love with her.

Was she also in his mind when he warned Carcano (February 4, 1764) that—

few women deserve a man's tender love. *Expersto crede Roberto.* You must have a touch of the blackguard or the madman in you to win a woman's genuine affection. The man who gains

¹ October 13, 1770.

² To Filippo, October 22, 1772.

a woman's respect rarely gains her love, thanks to that inexplicable something which Nature has given the all-too-adorable sex.

At this time Baretti was suffering from dizziness. "I must get out of Milan at all costs, because here I am plunged in melancholy and distress." He adds that he means to publish his Letters in Brescia or Ferrara, though he is trying to put people on a false scent by giving out that he has chosen Venice.¹

He left Milan in disgust for Venice, but broke the journey at Mantua, where he had friends. Here he wrote to Antonio Greppi (November 15, 1762) :

During the journey, and since my stay here, I have been in such a state of depression that I had not the heart to take up my pen and write a line to any one. The shame was greater than the grief, and makes me thank my dear Signor Antonio, my warm-hearted, generous, noble Signor Antonio, who has always done so much for me, that I should indeed be the most unfeeling monster alive, did I not realise that I am bound to him by a lasting tie of affection and gratitude. . . . I leave for Venice next Thursday.

Meanwhile Firmian showed his affection for Baretti by informing Andrada of his plans and bidding him take the necessary steps to prevent his printing in Venice. "Your Excellency," he

¹ To Amedeo, October 26, 1762.

wrote,¹ “may judge from my actions how sincere is my desire to act in accordance with your wishes.” Andrada took the hint, and Baretti was forbidden to print anything at all. He was wretched in the extreme.

Since I left Milan I have only written to you once from Mantua. . . . From Mantua I came on here, and immediately fell ill, and for a whole week felt sure that I was going to join our good Tanzi [who had died in the previous year]—an event which would not have caused me much sorrow.”²

When he had recovered he set to work again; and as the Venetian Government found no cause for complaint against him, they left him alone.

My spirit is crushed and broken, and I am utterly unable to grapple with the situation [he wrote to Francesco Carcano, April 16, 1763]. Here there is no one to encourage me and spur me on and revive my energy, as a friend should. Some of my friends’ letters comfort me, but the effect is passing, and worry and depression get the upper hand.

He was obliged to take everything reflecting on Portugal out of the remaining volumes.

The Devil himself got into the second volume. . . . I have printed a little of it, and shall print

¹ “Archivio storico Lombardo,” Milan, ann. xiii. 1886; cp. ser. ii. vol. ii. Quoted by G. Ricciardi.

² To Greppi, January 29, 1763.

even less of the other two, as I have lost all interest in them, since I find ignorance, intrigue, and malice so closely leagued against them. If I had not been pledged to the subscribers, I should have put the manuscript in the fire, and thus have removed all temptation to print it once and for all.¹

When at last he did apply for a licence to print the Letters, the authorities kept him waiting so long and mutilated them to such an extent that, in a fit of disgust, he refused to publish more than the first two volumes, which were all that ever appeared in Italy.

Such were the difficulties placed in the way of the printing of the best volume of travels that had appeared for many years. The style has a natural ease almost unknown at this period of long sentences. The descriptions are vivid and complete, and the independence of the criticism, which hampered its publication at every step, gave the book a real value. Baretti is most successful in his method and in the personal note he introduces. He was proud of the performance, as we see from the review he gave of it in the *Frusta letteraria* especially of the descriptions of Stonehenge, the Lisbon earthquake and the bull-fight. But nowadays most of us would prefer the story of Paolita. In

¹ To Carcano, November 19, 1763.

England we go to Davy for our account of the Lisbon earthquake, and descriptions of Stonehenge or of bull-fights have no novelty for us.

About this time he received a present from Johnson.

I suppose you received the *Idlers* [the Doctor wrote on July 20, 1762], and I intend that you shall soon receive *Shakespeare*, that you may explain his works to the ladies of Italy, and tell them the story of the editor, among the other strange narratives with which your long residence in this unknown region has supplied you.

Baretti was long in recovering his spirits.

Of myself I know not what to tell you, except that I lead my usual dull and lonely life and feel no affection or friendship for the few people I do know. You can imagine how unhappily I spend my time.¹

Gradually, however, he grew brighter, for he was nothing if not sociable, and we find him living in the greatest intimacy with Count Bujovich and, above all, with the Gozzi.

You ask whether I am a friend of the Gozzi. I do not see much of Count Carlo, but we are rather friends than not. Count Gaspare I love dearly, as well as his wife the Bergalli, and I dearly love his three little daughters and his two worthy sons. . . . Count Carlo is a great

¹ To Carcano, April 16, 1763.

genius: Count Gaspare has a well-balanced mind. This is my opinion of the two brothers.¹

Indeed, he spent every evening of his life with the Gozzi. To one of the girls he was particularly attached.

I come back to my little angel. . . . If you only knew the accomplishments she possesses, besides her distinguished appearance and sweet face! Her voice, when she sings, is the most beautiful I ever heard, and she plays the tambourine well, dances with the grace of a Serafino, understands poetry and writes a little herself, though she tears up what she writes at once. She speaks French well and already understands some English. Of course she is as clever with her needle as I am with my pen; and then her modesty, her sweetness, her good sense, her manner, one could talk about them for ever. Yet no one notices all these charms in this land of brutes! . . . Were she in England, she would have hosts of admirers, who would fight to own such a treasure.²

Baretti, in fact, was probably not a little in love with the Contessina, for, whatever he may say, he was always very susceptible. Indeed, he admits that he would gladly have robbed her father of her, had he felt himself in a position to do so, and declares that the news of her marriage gave him a sharp pang. He only hopes her husband may be worthy of her. Cantù

¹ To Carcano, Oct. 29, 1763.

² *Ibid.*, Jan. 1, 1764.

believes that Caterina Bicetti, his friend's sister, was another of his flames. She afterwards entered a convent, and we have several of Baretti's letters to her when she had taken the veil. They are, however, merely the letters of a friend, though they could hardly have been anything else under the circumstances. Baretti always sends greetings to every member of the Gozzi family by name in his letters to Count Bujovich. None of his letters to Count Gozzi, with whom he doubtless corresponded, have been preserved. In the *Frusta* he gives a few words of praise to the Contessa Gozzi's works. He generally refers to her as Irminda, her name in Arcadia being Irminda Partenide.

Baretti did not lose touch with his English friends. Most Englishmen of position brought letters to him, and he did his best to look after them. The mania for travelling had grown apace in England, and all who could afford it came abroad. Young men of quality swarmed over Europe with their bear-leaders, making the three years' tour before they settled down at home. The Dilettanti Club had been formed, "for which the nominal qualification is having been in Italy, the real one being drunk: the two chiefs are Lord Middlesex and Sir Francis Dashwood, who were seldom sober the whole time they were in Italy."¹

¹ Horace Walpole to Sir H. Mann, April 14, 1743.

Yet travelling was terribly expensive and uncomfortable to a degree, even for men of wealth. We have only to read Fielding and Smollett for full details. But the journey could be managed quickly, if necessary. In 1770 Baretti took four days from London to Paris, and ten from Paris to Turin, three of which he spent in inspecting some iron-mines on the way.

In the summer of 1763 there was a great influx of English visitors into Venice with the Duke of York, among them Beauclerk and Garrick, whom Baretti now made his friend for life. His beloved wife, the famous dancer La Violette, was seriously ill of sciatica, and we have the following interesting letters on the subject.¹

SIGNOR JOSEPH BARETTI to MR. GARRICK

VENICE, *July* 10th, 1764.

DEAR SIR,—

Countess Bujovich, the lady who told me of her miraculous remedy against the sciatica, has been out of town these three weeks, and I know not when she will be back again. But if I recollect well, the plaster is made with some Venetian soap and the yolk of an egg, well mixed together, applied to the painful part on a bit of blue paper. Have you forgot the black hen?²

¹ "Garrick Correspondence," i. 172.

² "My physicians have almost poisoned me with what they call *bouillons rafraîchissants*—'tis a cock flayed alive and boiled with poppy-seeds, then pounded in a mortar, afterwards passed through a sieve. There is to be one craw-fish in it, and I was gravely told it must be a male one—a female would do me more hurt than good."—Sterne, in a letter from Montpellier, February 1, 1764.

Do not neglect that particularity, and abstain from laughing, you incredulous mortal. To be serious, I heartily wish Mrs. Garrick a perfect recovery of her health, and should be very glad to hear her bettered by this simple remedy. I was much pleased to hear from more than one friend that she is much better now than she was when she left Venice, and that she has dismissed her stick and walks bravely about. Could I absent myself from here, I would certainly come to Albano, and wait daily on her in our Italian character of Cavalier Serviente, although she wants a stick no more. My best wishes and compliments wait on her instead of me.

Now, friend Garrick, give me leave to be a little peevish with you. How could you be such a witless man as to think that you could find Italian literature existing to the sum of thirty sequins? I scarcely think that you would find literature in the whole world worth such a sum. I reckon that you have about twenty sequins' worth in England, three sequins' in France, a couple of sequins' in Germany, and another couple in the rest of the world, which sums, put together, do not fully come up to what you laid out in that of Italy alone. Yet, though literature worth money be so very scarce, in my opinion, everywhere, I am not quite of your mind as to the books you bought, considered as books. Some of them (for I saw a list of them in Mr. Beauclerk's hands), some of them are valuable for their printer's sake, some for this, and some for that other foolish reason; and whenever you think of selling them again, I firmly

believe that it will not be any hard matter to get you your money again. Mr. Beauclerk, meanwhile, offers you twenty sequins if you are fully persuaded of having made a very bad bargain. So you see you will but lose ten sequins instead of twenty. I wish I had seen the books themselves—I could be more positive, in all probability, as to you having done yourself no harm ; for I firmly think that you have done by chance what many more people in Venice would likewise do deliberately. Be comforted, then, and do not consider yourself a great sufferer for a trifling loss that you may make at the very worst. The great sufferer is your lady, who is obliged to stop in a sorry place, physicking, instead of rambling about merrily in cheerful places. You will, I hope, excuse this long nonsense, and be persuaded that I am, and will always be, dear sir,

Your most humble and most obedient friend and servant,

JOSEPH BARETTI.

Both Garrick and Beauclerk had excellent libraries.

SIGNOR JOSEPH BARETTI TO MR. GARRICK¹

VENICE, *July 14th, 1764.*

DEAR SIR,—

Your defence is so eloquent and nervous, that had you betaken yourself to the bar as you did to the stage, I am positive you had been as formidable in Westminster-Hall as you are in Drury's play-house. I never saw anything more

¹ "Garrick Correspondence," i. 173.

advocate-like than the defence; and though the gallant Beauclerk be against the quoted sentiment of Hotspur, yet I am for it, as I do not pique myself to be anything more than a mortal man, and never dared to run counter to the general opinions.

As to the soap-plaister, I find Mr. Turton is not against it, and Mr. Righellini approved of it too. Nay, Turton says that soap in sciatical complaints is set down as a good remedy in an English Dispensary. I wish with all my heart it may produce good effect, as I had really a great value, and even affection, for your lady ever since she poured me a dish of tea the first time I saw her in London. I never shall forget that adventure, though she may. She did it in so graceful a manner, I could still paint her in that pretty attitude, had I Reynolds' or Guido's powers. Do not interpret this as a bold declaration of love for your best half; for was my love to her of the wicked kind, faith! husband, a cunning Italian would know better than to let thee into the secret. You see, sir, the effect of what you tell me, that the Professors at Padua declare me the best writer of Italy. Such flattery will always put a man in good-humour. However, I love still my country so much, that I should be sorry to be convinced they are in the right. Poor Italy, if they were!

Signor Sacchi¹ is still in Milan along with Tartaglia; and inclosed you have a letter that will do for both. But I have a notion you go another

¹ The famous actor whose abilities did so much for Gozzi's plays. He invented the mask of "Truffaldino," a specific form of "Arlecchino," and is often called in consequence Truffaldino-Sacchi.—J. A. Symonds, "Gozzi Memoirs," ii. 131, note.

way ; and it is a great pity, as you will lose an opportunity of seeing two actors not easily to be matched, if I am allowed to judge, after having seen you for ten seasons running.

Every Englishman here tells me that you do not come back to Venice, as they all did, the Duke not excepted ; but the Devil is in it if I do not go to see you in England again, since you will not be seen again in Venice.

· · · · ·
I wish you and your lady as good a journey home as you can desire ; and be assured I will be glad of any opportunity to show you both that I am, with the utmost affection and respect, dear sir,

Your most humble and obedient servant,

JOSEPH BARETTI.

My direction is, Alla Bottega del Signor Saviola, Libraio, in Merceria.

It would indeed be difficult to tell, except in one or two places, that these letters were written by a foreigner. Baretti was sending Garrick his “Frusta letteraria” regularly. Mrs. Garrick was completely cured of her sciatica, and Baretti thereby won Garrick’s lasting gratitude. Another letter to Garrick, obviously in reply to his thanks for all Baretti’s kindness and attention, is still in existence.¹

In the “Manners and Customs” Baretti says he regretted Garrick had not come in Carnival

¹ “Garrick Correspondence,” i. 375.

time and seen some of Carlo Gozzi's plays given, "and I am confident that he would have admired the originality of Gozzi's genius, the most wonderful, in my opinion, next Shakespeare, that ever any age or country produced." Baretti saw reason to moderate this excessive praise when the plays were published, and complained that Gozzi had spoilt them by bringing in "his confounded Pantaloons and Harlequins, Tartaglias, and Brighellas, who should only appear on the stage to amuse the common people"; and he severely criticises his style.¹

Topham Beauclerk had already become acquainted with Baretti in England, but he brought a letter with him from Johnson none the less. "I beg that you will shew Mr. Beauclerk," he wrote, "all the civilities which you have in your power; for he has always been kind to me." Baretti did his best to some purpose, for at his trial Beauclerk stated, in giving evidence, that "he gave me letters to some of the first people abroad. I went to Italy the time the Duke of York did. Unless Mr. Baretti had been a man of consequence, he could not have recommended me to such people as he did. He is a gentleman of letters." When one remembers Beauclerk's social position, such a statement carries weight with it. The trip was not a fortunate one for him.

¹ To Carcano, March 12, 1784.

George Selwyn writes, "Topham Beauclerk is arrived. I hear he lost £10,000 to a thief at Venice." This misfortune may have been the reason for Johnson's once declaring that a young man may spend his time better in almost any way than in travelling.

In 1764 we find Baretti referring to the "civilities he has been obliged to show to the numerous friends who have come to see me from England and elsewhere on the occasion of the last Senza," or Ascension Day celebrations in honour of the taking of Istria, Dalmatia, and the Islands by Venice—one of the great festivals of the time. It is clear that the season for foreigners there was, at that period, in the summer. One wonders whether they found the heat and the mosquitoes as trying as we do to-day.

He almost certainly met Boswell in Venice; for Boswell refers to a passage in one of Johnson's letters to Baretti before the latter's return to England, which he must have been shown by Baretti himself¹; and the irreligious remarks of one of Johnson's foreign friends, whom he had met abroad, seem also to belong to Baretti,² of whom they are quite characteristic, though, as a rule, he kept his opinions to himself. Boswell, by the way, on observing the quantity of frail ladies in Venice, is said to have remarked, "Italy has been called

¹ Hill's Boswell, iii. 25.

² *Ibid.*, ii. 88.

the Garden of Europe. I think it is the Covent Garden." We may feel sure that one so eager to meet people of any kind of distinction would not have missed a chance of seeing Baretti, especially as he was Johnson's friend. Perhaps their mutual dislike may have dated even from this early meeting.

Baretti always endeavoured to repay the kindness shown him in England by assisting Englishmen in Italy, and his letters are full of recommendations.

His assistance to every Englishman who wished to visit Italy [wrote Vincent, after his death¹], his readiness to give or procure recommendations, was constant, and many have received civilities and attentions from his family, who were unconscious that requests for that purpose had been transmitted.

¹ *Gent. Mag.*, vol. lix. p. 569.

CHAPTER VII

THE “FRUSTA LETTERARIA” AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

1763—1766

BARETTI must soon have begun to take stock of his country from a literary point of view. He had been absent ten years, living in an utterly different and far more healthy and congenial intellectual atmosphere, and on his return he doubtless looked at everything from quite another standpoint from what he had done when he left, as soon as the first enthusiasm had worn off. He had been introduced to an entirely new literature which had broken loose from the old classical trammels, and, moreover, he had enjoyed the friendship of Johnson, which was of inestimable value to him, as he always readily admitted. It is not true that he learnt to underrate blank verse in his English days, for he had already attacked it in his Preface to Corneille ; and his style, whether in English or Italian, owes nothing to Johnson. It possesses an ease that contrasts favourably with the Doctor’s heavy sentences, though Baretti did, to some extent, copy his love of paradox. He was naturally frank and

independent, and his stay in a country where a man could print whatever he liked allowed him for the first time to write unfettered and greatly increased his natural bent. But the chief lesson he learnt in England was the necessity of giving Italian literature a practical and solid character—of teaching it to say something. "I cannot help thinking rather in the English way," he wrote,¹ "and despising the men of letters who make no mental effort when they write." Baretti was thoroughly in sympathy with these characteristics of English literature, and his stay in England only served to strengthen his convictions.

Johnson, both by precept and example, assisted in developing in him those tendencies and points of view which in Italy, far removed from this invigorating influence, would have withered away without producing the wonderful results they actually did produce.²

Baretti found nothing changed at home. Reams of valueless verse were annually poured forth in the academies and taken with the utmost seriousness, no effort being made to produce anything of solid worth. He gradually formed a plan of issuing a *Review* on an English model to inculcate the lessons he had learnt abroad. He would have to imitate the *Rambler* rather than the *Spectator*.

¹ To Chiaramonti, June 1, 1764.

² L. Caetani, "Baretti e Johnson," quoted by Piccioni.

His purpose was serious, and his satire had the strength and bitterness of Johnson rather than the lightness of Addison, though in form he followed the *Spectator* rather than the *Idler*.

He realised that Arcadia was the arch-foe. By this time he had practically ceased to trifle in verse, and despised Arcadia and its branches from the bottom of his soul. When Francesco Carcano wrote proposing to return him his patent of membership for the *Trasformati*, he replied (June 15, 1763) :

If you wish to withdraw my patent of membership, pray do so. I may as well tell you that I have long been cured of my affection for these nonsensical academies—for such I consider them as far as any honour to be derived from them is concerned. Academies are useful when you are on the spot, because then a gentleman and a scholar can be sure of finding other gentlemen and scholars, with whom he may spend a few pleasant hours, at a given time in a given place. When you are away, an academy is of no use whatever.

Writing of the Arcadians to the same correspondent, he says (January 7, 1764) :

I assure you that what I really want is that my *Frusta* should spread like a fire through their stable, burning it and utterly destroying it, so that all these asses will no longer be able to take up their abode there ; and you see that I shall keep my word.

Hence the paper opens with a slashing review of Morei’s “History of Arcadia.”

The *Frusta letteraria* is supposed to be edited by an old soldier, “Aristarco Scannabue” (“Aristarchus the Dunce-killer,” as Baretti translates it), who is indignant at the number of bad books published, and at the bad habits and bad taste that are the result. He is therefore determined to use his “frusta,” or scourge, on—

all the wretched, clumsy moderns who are daily scribbling coarse comedies, dull tragedies, childish criticisms, trashy tales, frivolous treatises, and prose and verse of all kinds, entirely without life, substance, or the very smallest signs of any quality likely to make them agreeable or attractive to their readers or their country.

“Aristarco” is very bad-tempered, and has fought all over the world, having lost a leg off Gibraltar by a Moorish cannon-ball and received a nasty scar on his upper lip. His only companions are a Turkish slave called Macouf, and an old village priest, Petronio Zamberluco, who is an admirer of the writers of the day. As Baretti himself suffered from a bad leg during the winter of 1763, there is special point in “Aristarco’s” infirmity.

The idea is not very original; but Baretti was a warm admirer of the *Spectator*, declaring that it—has improved all classes in that beautiful isle—men and women, young and old, noble and plebeian,

religious and secular. This is something far more deserving of public thanks, as is clear to all, than the gift, noble and precious though it be, of some extraordinary scientific discovery.

The *Frusta* consists largely of reviews of books, but these are varied by occasional copies of verses and amusing paragraphs. The first number appeared on October 1, 1763, and it was published fortnightly, with the imprint of Roveredo, though actually printed in Venice.

Baretti had hoped that his friends would help him with contributions, as they would have done in England; and many of the verses were by friends, though they had originally been written for other occasions, such as the meetings of the *Trasformati*. But, on the whole, he was disappointed.

Many of them have played the prudent wise-acre at my expense and told me that I ought to have done this or that, and not have offended this person or that, . . . but none of them have helped me in the least, as they would have done in other countries in the case of a periodical.¹

Baretti was very difficult to satisfy, however. Chiaramonti, a new friend he had made about this time, did contribute once or twice at Baretti's request, but he refused to print the contributions as not being in keeping with the style of his paper;

¹ To Caterina Bicetti, July 26, 1764.

and this may have happened in the case of other friends, for Baretti was one of those people who would always feel that he could have done the work so much better himself. He disapproved of modesty in writing.

Have a good opinion of yourself and respect your powers, if you wish others to do so. In literature a certain noble arrogance is not out of place. . . . I like modesty, and consider myself modest in my actions; but once I take a pen in hand, I write without fear—that is, without modesty. I write because I think I write well, and so must you.¹

As was to be expected, “Aristarco” was not long in getting into trouble. He began with the Arcadians in the opening number, and in the second he had another hit at his old enemies, the archæologists. A certain Abbate Vallarsi had written a bulky volume to prove that some scratches on a leaden coffin were really ancient Christian inscriptions, of which he offered an elaborate explanation; but the Marchese Luigi Pindemonti showed the whole thing to be absurd. Baretti reviewed both books, and says that he must send the Marchese a certificate, appointing him his assistant—

in giving to the world a separate collection of all the absurdities that shall be printed in the future,

¹ To Chiaramonti, November 2, 1763.

or have been printed during the last few years, on the Etruscan language, Quirini's diptych, funeral urns, the bits of pottery now being unearthed in Umbria, or on the tripods, lamps, and nails found in the ancient cities of Industria or Herculaneum, or on other similar important matters which are like rays of the sun to enlighten our minds.

But the archæologists refused to submit to such treatment from their sworn foe. The Marchese Tanucci, then Minister of State in Naples, was president of an academy which had been instituted, under the direction of Monsignor Baiardi, to examine and arrange the results of the excavations at Herculaneum. Filled with indignation at Baretti's attack, he made strong representations to Count Finocchietti, the Neapolitan Resident in Venice, to have the review stopped and the author punished. Baretti saw that there was no time to lose, and enclosed the following letter to Count Tanucci in one to the Venetian authorities, dated December 29, 1763 :

YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

I flattered myself that the reasons given by me to Your Excellency in my previous letter would convince you that I was innocent, if not in fact, at least in intention, of any offence against Your Excellency or any one else by what I wrote in the second number of my periodical. But I see from what has since happened that I was mistaken in my surmise, and that Count Finocchietti has

received orders to make the serious complaints which he actually has made against me. Your Excellency must allow me, with all becoming respect, to point out once more that, even if I were of opinion that antiquarian researches were not very profitable to the human race, I should not consider that I deserved any more serious punishment than that of being called ignorant by those who are not of my way of thinking ; nor does it seem to me that it would be in accordance with the ordinary rules of justice to regard me as guilty of a State offence or of heresy merely on account of my private opinions. Literary judgments were never looked upon as great crimes in any country with which I am acquainted. The fact is that I have done nothing in my aforesaid paper but hold up to ridicule an author who has written a huge volume upon a very unimportant inscription, and advise most of my scholarly countrymen at the same time not to devote all their mental powers to a study so beset with doubts and uncertainties as archaeology ; and I added—and upon my honour this was the result of mere chance and not of any deliberate intention on my part—that I had no great opinion of the people who waste their time in writing letters on the lamps of Industria and the nails of Herculaneum. Who would have thought that for a foolish remark like this, for a caustic joke dashed off at full speed, I should have called down such a storm upon my head ? That I should not only have to look on at the suppression of my paper, which helps to support myself and others, but that I should also have to endure the serious charge of being disaffected and

disrespectful towards one of the greatest princes in the world ? I attach no importance to the loss of the money already spent in printing my sheets or of any profit that might accrue to me from their sale, though it is no slight matter to me, especially as the stopping of these profits would not deprive me of the abilities which God has given me, and I could at once find work equally useful.

The charge of disaffection and want of respect was far more serious.

I will not admit for a moment that I have insulted Your Excellency as President of the Herculaneum Academy, for I have honoured and esteemed Your Excellency for a much longer time than you imagine. Nor will I admit that I have insulted Monsignor Baiardi, for whose vast learning I feel the respect that all students must feel. I shall be deeply chagrined if I am forced by my ill-luck to make any apology for what I have done or what I meant to do in the matter—if I see a shadow, which is by nature merely a shadow and never ought to be anything else, take bodily shape. Fate is playing with me as she does with others, entangling me in a maze which would be a straight road to others. With one generous word Your Excellency could dispel the cloud which has been raised against me by the merest accident, and obtain the deep and lasting gratitude of one who would wish to have the honour, etc.

Fortunately Baretti attained his object. “ In the ninth number of the *Frusta*,” he wrote,¹ “ I

¹ To Carcano, January 28, 1764.

have bestowed some praise upon the Herculaneum book, and now I hope that all this trouble, which has caused me no little anxiety, will calm down.” “Aristarco” began to wield his scourge freely on all his pet bugbears. Not only was Goldoni mercilessly attacked for his use of dialect and occasional scurrility, faults universally recognised, but his plots, his originality, his characters, his dialogue, were all assailed; and Chiari was treated in the same way. In fact, he followed his own theory that “the world prefers scathing criticism, biting satire, good ridicule of a definite person to a thousand encomiums on a thousand persons. This is human nature.”¹

A new monster had sprung up in Milan during Baretti’s absence. A group of young men, with Count Verri at their head, had begun a paper on the model of the *Spectator* called *Caffè*. Like the Trasformati, they held that the authority attributed to the Crusca Dictionary was excessive; but while the Trasformati considered that you should find the best way of expressing your ideas in accordance with the spirit of the language, without borrowing from other tongues, Verri and Beccaria maintained that any source and any language might be laid under contribution. Verri declares² that the Crusca and the pretended purity of the Tuscan tongue ought to be solemnly

¹ To Carcano, April 27, 1765.

² *Caffè*, i. p. 30.

renounced before a notary. Now, Baretti was a rigid purist in the matter of language, and he gave vent to all his contempt for the *Caffè* in No. 26 of the *Frusta*, attacking it with merciless ridicule; and years afterwards he wrote from London:—

Mind you do not send me any more of [Verri's] works. I have no patience with worthless writers of that kind; and who could have patience with a man who boasts of not knowing how to spell the language in which he writes?¹

Blank verse, of course, came in for its share of abuse.

The three blank-verse writers I cannot yet touch, especially Count Algarotti, for fear of getting into trouble with the authorities. You understand me. I am beginning a good drubbing to Frugoni in No. 6, but I see that I shall have to keep silence for many months to come.

As a specimen of “Aristarco’s” style I have taken his criticism of Denina’s “Essay on Scotch Literature,” from No. 9 of the *Frusta*, as most likely to interest English readers.

In the “Essay on Scotch Literature” I cannot help being astonished at the author’s credulity in swallowing so many details about the supreme literary glories of Scotland, which glories, in Signor Denina’s opinion, far surpass those of

¹ To Careano, March 12, 1784.

England. I would wager that his knowledge of these glories is derived from one of the many learned Scotchmen who tour through Europe acting as "bear-leaders" to young English lords ; for I know that most of these bear-leaders are guilty of exalting the learning that comes from Aberdeen and Glasgow above that proceeding from Cambridge and Oxford. Were it not for this learning, which, thanks to their kindness, is now spreading through England, no one in England would even be able to read or write. This is more or less the tone adopted by every "Highland laddie" to any one who has the patience to listen to him. But if Signor Denina will only listen to me for a short while, who am neither Scotch, nor English, nor Whig, nor Tory, nor Presbyterian, nor Anglican, but just a good Italian Christian and, I hope, a lover of honesty, I will give him an account of the real relationship between Scotch and English literature.

He then explains that in England literature is a regular profession. There are a number of Scotch writers in London.

The Scotch, like all natives of barren countries, are hard-working and economical ; and what is more, they always stand loyally by each other and work for the common good of their country, which is never lost sight of by any of them in the pursuit of their own private advantage. The Scotch support, bring into notice, and praise each other with brotherly affection as much as they can ; and as several little groups of authors among them have

set up various literary tribunals, and together contribute to certain critical periodicals like the *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review*, and some others for different booksellers, there is not much chance for any one that comes before these tribunals who is not a Scot, for they make a point of depreciating and writing down all English authors as much as they can, in order to make the way easier and more open for their own writers. It is to these national literary confederacies perhaps more than to their own merits that many of their authors owe the great reputation which they enjoy for a time, but which sinks as that of their successors rises. Yet in spite of all the efforts of the Scotch, both in and out of London, there have hitherto been very few Scotch writers to compare with the hundreds of names of celebrated English writers. Among those of the past age were Lord Shaftesbury, Mr. Forbes, Bishop Burnet, and Dr. Arbuthnot—though I rather think he was a Scotchman too—who are esteemed by the English, not to mention some geometers. Denina does not mention these four, probably because he has never heard of them. Among the Scotch of the present day—all mentioned by Denina—are Hume, the historian, whose history is pleasant reading, in spite of his frequent Scotticisms; Robertson, another historian who has successfully imitated the style of the great Samuel Johnson, famous for his Dictionary, for the *Rambler*, the *Idler*, and many other wonderful works. The poet Tomson [*sic*] will never attain the fame of Pope. His "Seasons," in blank verse, are still much praised, but little read, and his other works are inferior to those of Pope.

Mallet wrote good English, and I remember that Richardson, author of the famous "Pamela," used to say that Mallet was the only Scotchman who never confused "shall" and "will" in the future tense. . . . Smollet [*sic*], or Smolett, as Signor Denina spells it, the translator of "Don Quixote" and author of "Roderick Random" and some other novels, has been much praised, though I cannot remember whether in the *Monthly* or the *Critical Review*, but has written nothing whatever to bring him real fame. This is the information I can give Signor Denina about contemporary Scotch writers. Let him show it to his English friends, and he will find it rather nearer the truth than what he has given his countrymen in his *Essay*, on the authority of some Scotchman.

If he thinks Baretti prejudiced, let him learn English, go to England, and see for himself. England not only abounds in men who write well, but is rich beyond all other countries in men who could win a high place in the Republic of Letters by their pens, but will not trouble to do so. This is why he has such a high opinion of these islanders. Denina should study Johnson and Warburton, and abandon—

the Humes, the Smollets, the Tomsons, and the others he mentions, always excepting Robertson and Mallet, who, as I said, write well and are free from Scotticisms. I must also warn him, for his better information and for that of all Italians studying English, not to rely too much

upon the opinions of the English themselves in the views he may hear them express concerning their great writers ; for I know few Englishmen who have not a spark more of imagination than they should have, when their own affairs are under discussion. Few Englishmen will own that Milton's blank verse bores one at times ; few will admit that Spenser's metre is most tedious ; few that Pope is too far-fetched and epigrammatical ; and few that a portion of Swift's brain was always defiled with filth.

It is easy to see that Baretti's views on the Scotch are inspired by Johnson. But with Smollett he had a special bone to pick. In a note on the Thrale-Johnson Letters (i. 183) he describes him as a "Scotch wit, who had some name in his day. He wrote a multitude of books, and among the rest, his travels through Italy, of which he gives such an account, as one would think it to be near as good a country as Scotland," which Baretti has just been abusing.

The *Frusta letteraria* is the best known of all Baretti's works, and the one on which his fame principally rests. No such criticism had as yet appeared in Italy. It has become a classic in its way, and is still highly valued for its sound principles, its correct and lively style, and the respect it shows towards all that is most deserving of respect. The use of satire and invective as a means of introducing new ideas was novel and

effective. It naturally attracted much attention in its day in literary circles, though Baretti complains that he could not sell ten copies in Rome or Florence¹; but in these towns he was not personally known and had no friends.

"Aristarco's" methods, however, were hardly calculated to make him popular. "If you only knew," he writes,² "the number of enemies the poor old man with the wooden leg has made, and the care he is obliged to take to make it possible for him to continue!" Goldoni, Verri, the Arcadians, the blank-verse writers, the archæologists—all of them hated him, and were only watching for a chance to pounce upon him, if he made a slip, or waiting for a leader to direct them in an attack. Even the aged Frugoni had written a feeble epigram against "Aristarco." Baretti afterwards pointed out that all those who attacked him were priests or monks, with the single exception of the Avvocato Costantini. This is not so surprising as it sounds, for at that period, especially in Rome, most professional men took the minor orders. Of course he had his friends, like the *Trasformati* and Parini, who playfully urges his Muse to write in blank verse that will "rouse to noble wrath the heart of my Baretti against the man who first dared to shake

¹ To Carcano, April 27, 1765.

² To Chiaramonti, December 17, 1763.

off the yoke of rhyme, that imitates the voice of plaintive Echo.”¹

At last a champion appeared—a champion almost worthy of Baretti’s steel. In No. 18 he had reviewed the “Saggio di Commedie filosofiche,” by Padre Appiano Buonafede, Abbot and Visitor of the Celestine Order. It was a series of dialogues, in which the ancient philosophers were represented as quarrelling with each other in a manner not unamusing. Baretti criticises the work, it is true, but does full justice to its merits. From one of Johnson’s letters, however, it would seem that Baretti had already had some differences with a Celestine. “I have lately seen Dr. Stratico, Professor of Padua, who has told me of your quarrel with an abbot of the Celestine Order, but had not the particulars very ready in his memory.”² Whoever this may have been, Buonafede flew into as violent a passion as Baretti himself would have done, for he was quite as combative, and set about writing an attack. This he called the “Bue Pedagogo,” which was printed at Lucca in 1764, and was full of every kind of abuse of his enemy, just or unjust—exactly the kind of work Baretti would have written, but without his wit to raise it above the commonplace. For instance, in No. 19 of the *Frusta* “Aristarco” says that,

¹ Parini, Opere, Milan, 1803, vol. i. p. 227.

² July 20, 1762.

though he had examined a number of ruins, he had never been bitten with a desire "to take up the stupid trade of an antiquary, which is only fit for a porter."¹ Baretti is therefore accused of calling Kings porters and Popes stupid, and the most is made of the Tanucci incident. "He transforms me altogether into an ox," wrote Baretti,² "a pedant, a butcher, a Piso, a Vatinius, and a hundred other shapes, so that I put Count Carlo Gozzi into the shade with my transformations." The "Bue Pedagogo" reached Venice in February 1765, and was reprinted with the permission of the authorities, but without the passages about Tanucci.

By this time, however, poor "Aristarco" was no more.

I shall certainly not continue the *Frusta*, because it has been suspended by the proper magistrate without any reason being given, except that he was dissatisfied with my treatment of the poor poet Bembo, who was a gentleman of Venice. So, you see, you must not call a Venetian gentleman a poor poet, even after he has been dead for two hundred years."³

In No. 25 he had given a careful and judicious criticism of Bembo, at which no one could have

¹ "Facchino," a porter, is a term of contempt in Italian. Cp. the French "faquin."

² To Chiaramonti, February 16, 1765.

³ To Carcano, March 30, 1765.

taken offence. Hence it has been supposed that the authorities made this a pretext for stopping the *Frusta* on account of the outcry it had raised; and this seems the most probable explanation.

Baretti cannot have been altogether sorry at what had happened. He had already decided only to bring out the *Frusta* once a month in the new year, and to publish it himself, as he was tired of the endless trouble caused him by the carelessness of his printer.¹

All this writing, to which I am condemned, has so disgusted me with pens and paper that I have almost decided not to continue my sheets, in order to be free from the intolerable worry. I have already hinted as much in No. 21. The ceaseless work is gradually causing me dizziness and a running at the eyes, which might prove no laughing matter some day.²

But the fact that the suppression occurred just when the “Bue Pedagogo” appeared in Venice must have been most galling, and was very unfortunate for Baretti.

He at once set about preparing an answer to Buonafede, and began by writing and asking him whether he was really the author or not. He received two replies. The first said :

I have several times absolutely declared in the presence of several persons that I do not recognise

¹ To Chiaramonti, December 29, 1764.

² To Carcano, August 25, 1764.

the work as mine. I make the same answer to you and your questions now.

The second ran :

By this time you will have received my answer, and I believe it will have removed from your mind any suspicion that I am the author of the pamphlet. . . . I never dreamt of composing this pamphlet.

If this is not tantamount to a denial of authorship, it is difficult to see what could be. Buonafede was obviously afraid of Baretti's reply, well knowing what a redoubtable foe he had raised up against himself. He endeavoured to impress Baretti with his importance by signing all his titles, and he even persuaded a young monk to declare himself to be the author of the “*Bue Pedagogo*.” His friends in Venice induced the authorities to order Baretti to keep silence ; but Angelo Contarini, the officer appointed to inform him of their decision, betrayed the secret by speaking of the *Padre Abbate* Buonafede's “*Bue Pedagogo*” ; and when Baretti was safely out of Italy he acknowledged the authorship.

This treatment, coming after many months of hard work, was more than Baretti could stand, and he was ill for nearly two months in consequence.

I have been in bed once again for a fortnight ; but to-day I am better. . . . As soon as I am well

I shall leave Venice, which I hate since the suppression of the *Frusta*, and perhaps I shall return to England. . . . I am not giving you my reasons for this sudden decision ; but I may sum them up by saying that in Italy, especially in Venice, there is too much *canaille*, and I do not mean to stay here. . . . An enemy in Italy can do you endless harm, while your friends are of little help. I am eager to return to a country where the opposite is the case, nor do I mean to show myself again in these lands, so absurdly called Christian.¹

As soon as he was able to move, which was not till after the middle of 1765, Baretti withdrew into Papal territory, to Bologna, where he had friends. It was well for him that he did so. Buonafede and his party informed the Venetian Government that Baretti had spoken shamefully both of the Government and of Contarini. The danger was real, and even his life might not have been safe, for when once roused the Venetian oligarchy was ruthless. Its arms were long, and its system of espionage the best organised in Europe. Count Incisa di Camerana, Sardinian Resident in Venice, took pity on him, and urged him to retire “to some unknown place for the present, where you will be safe.” Not that Incisa was really Baretti’s friend. He strongly disapproved of his methods of criticism, and wrote to Count de Viry—who had formerly been the Piedmontese

¹ To Carcano, April 20, 1765.

Minister in London—that it might be a good thing to put him under arrest for a little. “This would gratify Venice, ensure Baretti’s safety, punish his rashness, and serve as an example to those Piedmontese who wander through the world, bringing their country a bad reputation by their conduct.”¹

Needless to say, Baretti kept this information to himself, but hastened to take the advice given. His friends found him a cottage at Monte Garbello, near Bologna, where he remained for five months, his only companion being an old woman, who cooked and kept house for him. He did not inform even his most intimate friends of his whereabouts, and signed the few letters he was obliged to write “Giuseppe di Carretto,” the name of the noble family with which he believed himself connected. “There are different rumours about Baretti,” wrote an old friend. “He has either fled from Venice and his own country, or died in Bologna or Florence, which I do not believe.” Here he wrote a letter to Cardinal Albani in Rome to protect himself against any steps that might be taken there to interfere with him by Buonafede’s supporters. Fortunately for him, relations between the Pope and the Venetian Government were, as usual, rather strained, and the Pope was not likely to gratify Venetian resentment by punishing Baretti.

¹ Ricciardi, “Giuseppe Baretti,” etc., pp. 61-3.

REPLY TO THE “BUE PEDAGOGO” 173

Here also the reply to the “Bue Pedagogo” was finished and published at Ancona as Nos. 26-33 of the *Frusta*, though with the imprint of Trenta. The fact that it was allowed to be published in the Papal States shows that Buonafede was not a man of much influence. It is described as “correct, imaginative, and natural, more witty and pointedly cutting than his enemy’s attack, but just as violent and lacking in moderation ; it is even scurrilous and spiteful.” A copy was sent to Buonafede, with a letter printed afterwards in London. Baretti was very proud of this performance. To his brother Filippo he wrote on May 24, 1766 :

The Professors at Bologna are all agreed that in these discourses I have equalled the Greek Eustathius upon Homer and the Latin Quintilian. Whatever the truth may be, I know I had to make a great mental effort to write them, as well as the Satire. To you they may not seem remarkable, because they are written in a style that lets every one imagine he can do as well. Let them only try. The monk sees this perfectly clearly, and no longer ventures to open his mouth, in spite of the insolence with which he was inspired when he first girded up his loins to write.

Baretti never forgave or forgot Buonafede, and attacks the Celestines fiercely in the seventeenth letter of his London collection for having made him their general.

Issuing from his hiding-place, Baretti made a trip to his native district of Alto Monferrato, which he thoroughly enjoyed.

I left ten days ago, bringing with me ten mules laden with most valuable wines, the chief product of the province, which the numerous friends and relations I have in those parts vied with each other in giving me, almost against my will, to drink in England. I shall have enough for at least four years, if my English friends will only turn water-drinkers and take a dislike to the best wine the world produces.¹

On his return he went to Leghorn, where he spent a week with his stepbrother Paolo, who was in business there, and about whom he seems to have quite changed his views. Paolo's other brothers were indignant at his having received so large a share of their father's fortune, but Giuseppe writes :

Is it his fault that he has robbed us of a few thousand francs ? The fault is his mother's, not his, and I do not mean to trouble him in any way, considering how kindly he treated me.

Thence he went to Genoa, intending to cross to Marseilles and return to England through France. But here his ill-luck really reached a climax, and he was reduced to the lowest depths of misery and want.

¹ To Bujovich, April 26, 1766.

GENOA, June 7th, 1766.

MY DEAREST BROTHERS,—

Besides the two letters that you answer I wrote another, which has probably gone astray, as you do not mention it. In this I told you that my journey came to nothing, for the following reasons. When I had sent off my wine and my luggage to London with a captain, who asked me twenty-five guineas for a passage [this was more than Baretti then possessed], I at once decided to go by land, as I could not go by sea, since there was no other ship bound straight for London; and I should actually have left for Marseilles, travelling thence through France, either on horseback or on foot. But by the luck of the Evil One an English gentleman called Skipmith, whom I had known in Venice, chanced to pass through here. He was overjoyed at finding me, and proposed to take me with him on an English ship, which was just leaving, to Cadiz, whence he would have taken me on in another boat to London. Imagine how I thanked Heaven for this fortunate meeting! I accepted, but the ship's departure was delayed, and it was a fortnight before all was ready. At last everything was in order; but now she was bound for Lisbon instead of Cadiz. Well, then, Lisbon let it be. Off I went with the Englishman to the Portuguese Consul for passports, without which no one can enter Portugal. On hearing my name the Portuguese Consul said that he could not give me a passport. "Why?" "Because you wrote a book at Nice in favour of the Jesuits, in which you bring all kinds of horrible charges against the King and his Ministers." "But this is absolutely

false." "False? Why, it was at my request and that of Signor Almada that the King of Sardinia sent the Nice printers to the gallies, banished you from his kingdom, and confiscated all the copies printed. If you go to Portugal, you will certainly end like the Padre Malagrida."¹

Imagine my feelings on hearing such a story! I could only answer that some scoundrel must have used my name, well known in the Republic of Letters, in order to gain credit for his book. I described to him the life I had been leading for the last few years in Italy, and convinced him that I was not the man in question. But after endless talk and discussion the result was that, whether I was the man or not, he advised me out of kindness not to go on board the ship, because I should certainly be arrested and tried in Lisbon, and should find it very difficult to regain my liberty quickly. He added that, at the time when the book was printed, he had been ordered by his Court to pursue me everywhere, and that he had had me followed in many parts of Switzerland, whither I had fled, and that he had heard at last that I had escaped into Prussia. After carefully considering matters, I saw that I could not run the risk. The Englishman left, and I remained behind in a worse plight than ever; for as I had expected to stay with him at Cartagena, where it is very hot and

¹ A leading Jesuit, executed at the time of the expulsion of the Society from Portugal in 1761. Goldsmith was once dining with the Lord Mayor Townsend, and told him that people often called him "Malagrida," tactfully adding, "But I protest and vow to your lordship I can't conceive for what reason, for Malagrida was an honest man!" Mr. Walpole said that this story was a picture of Goldsmith's whole life.

where silk is very dear, I had had a silk coat made, but was robbed of it some hours before I had even put it on by some rascally workmen, whom Genoese justice was either unable or unwilling to find guilty of the theft.

Such is life and such the way things usually seem to go with a man born to my luck. What am I to do ? I have done what I can to help myself. I have written to the correspondents who owe me money, but they have refused to settle my claims upon various excuses. Paolino honestly wrote and told me that he has not a single penny ; and I learnt from a mutual acquaintance, who came the other day from Leghorn, that he is doing very badly since the failure of one of his London correspondents. Here I am, then, in a serious fix, without an idea how I am to get out of it. It is no longer possible for me to go to London, either by land or sea. I have hardly any money left. Misfortune after misfortune overtakes me. What am I to do or think or decide ? I am sure I have not an idea. I know it cannot end well. This fresh blow, after all the others that have fallen upon me, convinces me that I am not born to have any more luck in the world. It is all I can do to keep awake, for I am almost sinking under an irresistible drowsiness. How I wish that, instead of lasting a number of hours in the day, as it usually does, it would last for ever ! Now, Giovanni, do you think I am in a fit state to inquire after Tini or Benders ? Even if I could do so, I should not like to visit a lady in this heat, dressed in a winter coat, as I should be obliged to do, since my summer one has been stolen. I spend

most of my time at the inn, ashamed to go out, and it would be better if I never left it alive again, for life is not worth much when one has to live as I have done for so many years, a burden to one's brothers, without ever really succeeding, though people call me clever. This is the result of having had a mad father, who did not make me learn some trade or profession suited to my character when I was young. I have struggled hard, ever since fate first buffeted me about the world. I have spent months and months at my desk, with a dogged perseverance hardly to be believed. In fact, I have done the best I could ; and if it is written that all my past efforts and my perseverance are to come to nothing, so let it be.

I know that this letter will not be much to your liking, and I did not intend to make it so long ; but what is written is written. Henceforth I shall write no more, and I beg you not to answer me, but to leave me to my wretched fate. If by some unhoped-for and unlooked-for chance I ever rise again, I shall write to you. If not, this is my last letter, for writing to you sets me thinking, and thinking is my undoing. Good-bye all.

From this it is plain that poor Baretti was in the very depths of despair—in fact, in the worst position in which he had ever been in his whole life, and one from which there seemed no hope of his rescuing himself. But his brothers, as usual, behaved generously, and he wrote thanking them for enabling him once more to go his way, with God's help.¹

¹ June 14, 1766.

But even now he was not at an end of his troubles. All this worry, coming upon him during the unhealthy season of the year, when his constitution had been weakened by his previous illness, brought on a serious fever.

After receiving my last [he wrote to his brothers on July 18] you must have felt sure that I had started. But before my letter left Genoa I was in grave danger of leaving this world. Two hours after sending it to the post I was seized with so severe a fever and such a terrible headache, that I was in great danger. . . . Yesterday and to-day I have begun to get up. . . . You can imagine how utterly this long, cruel illness and my inability to start at once have reduced me. . . . I cannot help it. The hand of Providence has stricken me down, and I fail to see why it delights to do so. O God ! what have I done to deserve such a cruel succession of misfortunes ?

As usual, Baretti found friends in Genoa, and after his illness was taken by the Celesia family to their villa outside the town for a fortnight, where he soon recovered strength enough to travel. He did not finally leave Italy, however, till after the middle of August, when he returned to London through France, by Marseilles and Paris.

CHAPTER VIII

ENGLAND ONCE MORE

1766—1769

ON reaching London, Baretti once more took up his residence with Giardini, in “Little-Queen-Anne-street, near Portland-Chapel, facing Mr. Wilton, the Statuary”; but his letters were directed to the Prince of Orange Coffee-house. He was warmly welcomed back.

My friends here are all really pleased to see me again, and my acquaintance among both sexes has increased, so that I live quite happily, except that I feel a pang of longing when I let my fancy roam to different parts of Italy, especially to Venice.¹

Baretti found many of his friends in very different positions from those in which he had left them. Garrick and Reynolds had, of course, established reputations before his departure. Johnson, too, had even then reigned undisputed tyrant in the realm of letters, but he had been sorely troubled by “that eternal want of pence

¹ To Bujovich, May 15, 1767.

which vexes public men." Now, however, he was a pensioner, and, thanks to Lord Bute's £300 a year, he was at last raised above the necessity of working for his daily bread and for that of his numerous dependents. His gratitude to His Majesty was such that he could not find words in the English language to express it, and had to have recourse to French, declaring to Sheridan that he was *pénétré* with His Majesty's goodness. He had written to Baretti on the very day on which he thanked Lord Bute for his offer, but had characteristically avoided all reference to his pension. His friends calculated that he never spent more than £80 a year on himself, though he allowed £100; and he was continually begging on behalf of distressed persons, many of whom did not care to see him unless he had something for them. No wonder he laughingly told Boswell that he wished his pension were twice as large, so that those who attacked him for having accepted it could make twice as much noise as they did.

Boswell had now found his life-work in the study of Johnson, which was to result in the best biography ever written.

So keepers guard the beasts they show,
And for their wants provide,
Attend their steps where'er they go,
And travel by their side,

was the complaint of Johnson's wrathful ghost.¹ One is not surprised at the sage's occasional irritability under his disciple's ceaseless fire of questions. Boswell once asked him whether he could tell him why pears were oblong and apples round! His attitude towards Johnson reminds one of that of a schoolboy towards a revered headmaster. He laughs at his faults as loudly as any one, and rejoices in noting his little peculiarities, but his admiration for his great qualities is none the less sincere. Fortunately, Johnson was a big enough man to appreciate his methods, and was highly delighted with Boswell's Hebrides diary, expressing his pleasure to hear that Mrs. Thrale had also read it. He had no wish to pose before the world as other than he was, and he was too well assured of Boswell's devotion to have any doubts as to the nature of the picture he would ultimately leave of him, even though he did not omit the shadows.

Soon after his return Baretti made the acquaintance of Edmund Burke, a man for whom Johnson's respect was unbounded. "If a man," he once said, "were to go by chance at the same time with Burke under a shed, to shun a shower, he would say—this is an extraordinary man." He was the only one of his friends whom Johnson feared in conversation. Once, when he

¹ *Gent. Mag.*, vol. lvi. p. 427.

was ill, some one proposed to bring Burke to see him. "That fellow calls forth all my powers," he exclaimed. "Were I to see Burke now, it would kill me." Burke liked Baretti, and stood by him loyally in his hour of need, as we shall see.

Now, too, he was first introduced to Goldsmith—the shiftless Goldy, with his fine clothes and reckless extravagance, towards whom Johnson acted as a kind of elder brother, helping him when he could, often bullying him, though ready to apologise when he had gone too far. As a literary man, he is undoubtedly the greatest figure of them all—the one among them who possessed creative genius. "The Vicar of Wakefield" and "She Stoops to Conquer" are read and acted to-day, when the works of Johnson are little more than names to the average reader. Now at last success had come to him. "The Traveller" had appeared and been universally admired, while "The Vicar of Wakefield," which had lain idle in the bookseller's desk—so little did he think of it—ever since Johnson had sold it for £60 in 1762, was now brought out. The story of the transaction is amusing, and will perhaps bear repeating, though it is well known. Goldsmith sent to inform Johnson that he was in great distress and could not come to him, and therefore begged Johnson to visit him.

Johnson sent him a guinea, and followed as soon as he was dressed, and found him in his famous Islington lodgings, where Hogarth first made his acquaintance. His landlady had arrested him for his rent, and he was in a violent rage.

I perceived that he had already changed my guinea [Johnson told Boswell], and had got a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him. I put the cork into the bottle, desired he would be calm, and began to talk to him of the means by which he might be extricated. He then told me that he had a novel ready for the press, which he produced to me.

Johnson saw its merit, sold it, and enabled Goldsmith to pay his rent, which he did, "not without rating his landlady in a high tone for having used him so ill." Johnson always maintained that £60 was a fair price for the book at the time, though, of course, the publication of "*The Traveller*" greatly increased its value. It came out in the year of Baretti's return, and gradually won popularity, though it rather puzzled people at first.

At Reynolds's suggestion, this group of friends had formed the famous Literary Club in 1764. In fact, they were now men of acknowledged position in England. Baretti must have been obliged to apply to some of them for assistance on his first arrival, but their purses seem usually

to have been at his disposal with a generosity which he is never tired of praising when speaking of the English. If he ever got his trunks and wine from the sea-captain, the bill must have been a long one; but the friends who helped him redeem the cargo doubtless did their duty in helping him dispose of it.

He soon had a plan for bringing himself once more before the public. On his return to England, a young lady of his acquaintance complimented him on having quitted his bad country. He declared it was not bad; but she maintained that it was, and told him she had been reading all about it in Sharp's "Letters from Italy."¹ The book came out in 1766, and was by Dr. Samuel Sharp, a distinguished Guy's surgeon, a friend of Garrick, who often asked his advice on theatrical matters. He had travelled in Italy for his health in 1756-7, and the "Letters" were the result.

Baretti had already attacked it in the *Frusta*, but he now borrowed it and prepared to answer it. The "Letters" were superficial, as was only to be expected—for the author was often laid up for long periods together—and full of ridiculous mistakes; yet Johnson had said that there was a good deal of matter in them. These accounts of countries, written after a hasty tour, always disgusted Baretti; he well observes that "'tis the

¹ "Manners and Customs," ii. 362.

same as if a cow was to write of a horse, or a horse of a cow—they could be no judge of each other." He therefore set to work upon his "An Account of the Manners and Customs of Italy, with Observations on the Mistakes of some Travellers with regard to that Country."

When he had finished the first volume, he wrote to his brothers (September 18, 1766) :

If Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke, Dr. Goldsmith, and others among the leading men of letters and gentlemen of this nation do not deceive me, the work should win me an honourable position throughout England and make them all, ladies and gentlemen alike, eager to know an author who writes their language as I do.

He adds that he is rapidly growing stout, owing to his being obliged to spend so many hours every day at his desk, and that he could hardly button a waistcoat he had bought only a month ago. He is more than forty guineas in debt, but he hopes to begin drawing his money the day after to-morrow, and start paying off what he owes. For this work he is to receive two hundred guineas, half in money, half in books.

The "Manners and Customs" is dedicated to Lord Charlemont, whose letter of thanks for the dedication is preserved in the Charlemont MSS., vol. i., p. 292. The book is really capital reading, even at the present day. It is full of interesting

details of Italian life at the period, while the note of controversy that runs through it gives it a touch of individuality, eminently characteristic of its pugnacious author. His old enemies, of course, are once more attacked. This is how Goldoni fares :

As his chief scope is always bustle and show, he has stunned the ears and captivated the hearts of the vulgar, and of the Venetian gondoliers especially, to whom he has paid so many fine compliments in many of his plays. . . . His sentiments are generally so trite and so vulgar, whether he makes a duchess or a footman speak, that those of one may full as well fit the other. . . . In one of his plays, he makes a Londoner hint at the canals of London, imagining London to be such a town as Venice ; and makes another Englishman talk of a most dreadful and un-frequented forest within twenty miles of London, where an outlawed Scotch lord hid himself in a mountainous cave for many years.

His Italian Dictionary had already given him high standing as a man of learning.

A few days ago [he writes ¹], the Royal Society of Antiquaries here unexpectedly elected me a member, though no such idea had ever entered my head. This is a great honour, and increases the number of my friends and acquaintances. They are the pick of Englishmen.

¹ To Bujovich, June 25, 1767.

Imagine Baretti, of all men, among the Antiquaries ! Even he must have laughed over his election, and wondered what impression it would make upon his brother-antiquaries at home. But he was naturally most gratified at the compliment paid him.

The success of the “Manners and Customs” was instantaneous, and greater than even its sanguine author could have expected. It established him once and for all as an English writer.

The King himself has read my book and said he liked it, and there is no one of literary note in this city who is not anxious to make my acquaintance. The other evening a beautiful lady, famous for her wit, her charm, her modesty, and many other good qualities, kissed me without ceremony in a very large assembly, saying she did so as a return for the pleasure which my second volume especially had given her. . . . I am getting fat and heavy, and have little liking for movement or exercise.¹

His account of Italy [said Johnson] is a very entertaining book ; and, Sir, I know no man who carries his head higher in conversation than Baretti. There are strong powers in his mind. He has not, indeed, many hooks ; but with what hooks he has, he grapples very forcibly.²

This has become the stock quotation about Baretti in England, and is a very good summary of his character by one who knew him well.

The two following letters explain themselves

¹ To Filippo, March 26, 1768.

² Hill's Boswell, ii. 57.

and show how genuine was Garrick's gratitude to Baretti.

MR. JOSEPH BARETTI TO MR. GARRICK¹

QUEEN ANNE STREET, PORTLAND CHAPEL,
Saturday, March 15th, 1768.

DEAR SIR,—

I want fifty pounds, and I promised to apply to you whenever that should be the case. Please, therefore, to send them me at Mr. Wilson's,² who lives opposite to me, and the letter with the bill enclosed will be forwarded to me by his people to Snaresborough, where I intend to go for a few days this afternoon, that I may end a little bit of a work at a distance from the temptations of the town.

I am yours,
JOSEPH BARETTI.

MR. JOSEPH BARETTI TO MR. GARRICK¹

March 16th, 1768.

I begged your lady's acceptance of my book, and not yours; so you had no reason to thank me for it, my good master. As to your criticism, I say that it is noble to compassionate those who praise us, and everything round us. But the man whom you look upon as an old friend, I look upon as a calumniator; and whatever mercy he might expect from an Englishman, he was to wait for nothing but justice from an Italian. I am, dear sir,

Your most obedient and most humble servant,
JOSEPH BARETTI.

¹ Garrick Correspondence, i. 292.

² This should certainly be Wilton.

The reference is, of course, to Sharp, and an interesting letter of his *re* Baretti is included in the Garrick Correspondence,¹ evidently written to an Italian friend of his who had been assailed by Baretti in the “Manners and Customs.”

BATH, April 1st, 1768.

SIR,—

I had the pleasure of yours by yesterday's post; and though I find that you have been greatly provoked by Signor Baretti, my advice is, that you should not take notice of it in print; for as you must write in English, in order to be read in this country, the disadvantages you will be under in that particular are unspeakable. Mr. Baretti's proficiency in our tongue is astonishing; and were he as capable of speaking truth, and making sensible observations, as he is of the language, his book would have been a most agreeable entertainment.

He goes on to complain of Baretti's shameless misrepresentations, and with some reason, for in a controversy he never troubled to give an adversary's exact words, but set down what he felt sure he really meant to imply. Hence there was sometimes a considerable difference between what his opponents actually said and what they were represented as saying, which caused them no little annoyance. Sharp answered Baretti, drawing freely upon the *Frusta letteraria* which Garrick

¹ Vol. i. p. 296.

lent him ; and Baretti replied to the answer in an appendix to the second edition.

But Baretti's defence did not satisfy his own countrymen, who considered that he had not shown proper respect for the ladies of Piedmont ; and in 1770 a reply was published in the form of a letter to Lord Charlemont¹ by Baron Giuseppe Vernazza di Freney. It did not, however, trouble Baretti, who took no notice of it, except in his private letters.

The improved position in which Baretti found most of his old friends on his return enabled them to introduce him to an even more agreeable social life than he had led before ; and the great success of his book made him widely sought after. At that period the average man was utterly incapable of appreciating ladies' society. The coarseness of taste and the prevalence of hard drinking among the men kept them far more at the taverns than in their own homes ; and they felt infinitely more at their ease among the fair and frail they met there than among ladies of their own standing. It was only a small section of highly cultivated men who as yet preferred the drawing-room to the tavern or the average club. An Italian brought up as Baretti had been was not likely to care for such men's society, for to a Latin the

¹ Lettere di un Piemontese al Sig. Conte di Charlemont sopra la relazione d' Italia del Sig. Baretti.

presence of women is the first essential of social enjoyment; and he naturally soon took his place among the men whom the more cultured ladies of the day were glad to have about them. The general separation of the sexes in their pursuits and pleasures made the few men who really liked their society greatly in demand among the ladies.

As early as June 25, 1767, Baretta wrote to Bujovich that he is continually dining out, and that, among other lady friends—

There are two who, in my opinion, are the most beautiful girls in all the world. They possess every good quality imaginable, and in heaven itself you could not find two nobler creatures. After dinner I spend my time chatting and drinking tea either with these Miss Hornecks or with others; and in the evening we generally make a party at quadrille, or else I sup in the best company.

The Hornecks were at this time one of the most charming families in London, and one of the most popular among the leading lights of the day. Reynolds, Garrick, Johnson, Burke, and, above all, Goldsmith were continually with them. Baretta was always fond of them, and speaks of them with affection.

The Hornecks were [he notes¹], and are still, two ladies no less beautiful than modest and sensible. Both have been my pupils, but Madam

¹ On Thrale-Johnson Letters, i. 261.

[Mrs. Thrale] never liked them much, because few would take notice of her where they were.

They were a Devonshire family, consisting of Mrs. Horneck, widow of Captain Kane Horneck; her son Charles, a young Guardsman; and her two delightful daughters, Catherine, the “Little Comedy” of Goldsmith’s verses¹; and the “Jessamy Bride,” Mary, who was two years younger than her sister. They were beautiful, lively, graceful girls, who must have been loved by every one who came near them, as we can see from the portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds, except perhaps by a few jealous members of their own sex.

Here Goldsmith must have continually met Baretti and come to hate his manner. “He least of all mankind,” says Davies,² “approved Baretti’s conversation; he considered him as an insolent, overbearing foreigner”—foreigner, apparently, being a term of abuse in Goldsmith’s vocabulary. The dislike was natural. Goldsmith’s great ambition was to shine in society, but in spite of all his efforts he became “confused and unable to talk in company,” though, as he amusingly expressed it, he always got the better when he argued alone; and it must have been particularly galling to him, conscious as he was of vastly superior parts, to be “downed” in conversation

¹ “Reply to an Invitation to Dinner at Dr. Baker’s.”

² “Life of Garrick,” ii. 108.

by the fiery Piedmontese, who considered Goldsmith "an unpolished man and an absurd companion," and probably showed him but little respect. Reynolds always maintained that Goldsmith possessed far greater parts than was generally supposed, and Boswell's descriptions may be unfair. How could a Scot understand an Irishman? But whether intentionally or not, Goldsmith seems usually to have made a ridiculous impression in company, popular though he always was.

One can imagine the self-assertive, aggressive Baretti standing by the heavily-ornamented mantelpiece, monopolising the Jessamy Bride as she poured out the tea at the low table, while the shy, awkward Goldsmith vainly endeavours to enter into conversation with her, and at last retires in dudgeon to the stiff-backed sofa. Utterly unable to conceal his feelings, the unfortunate man would sit there raging, and would gladly give his eyes, or even his newest and most wonderful coat, which he was then wearing and for which he was perhaps even then being dunned, to possess even a portion of the self-assurance of the hated foreigner. Then, as Baretti at last goes off to talk to some one else, Mary would see his forlorn condition, and come and talk to him and bring him back to his habitual good-temper in a moment.

The elder sister married Henry Bunbury, brother

to Sir Charles, the famous racing-man and well-known figure about town, who owned Diomed, the first Derby winner; but Mary did not marry General Gwyn till a year after Goldsmith's death, which circumstance was the foundation for Washington Irving's pretty, but utterly improbable, romance, woven round Goldsmith and the Jessamy Bride. That the poet was in love with her there is every probability, but it is hardly possible that she returned his passion. The friendship, however, continued as long as Goldsmith lived.

Some years later, after the great success of "She Stoops to Conquer," the *Monthly Packet* contained an attack on Goldsmith, in which appeared the following sentence:

Would man believe it, and will woman bear it, to be told that for hours the great Goldsmith will stand surveying his grotesque ourang-outang's figure in a pier-glass? Was but the lovely H——k as much enamoured, you would not sigh, my gentle swain, in vain.

He went at once to the offices with Captain Horneck, where he saw Evans, the proprietor, whom he mistook for the editor. "I have called," he said, "in consequence of a scurrilous attack in your paper upon me (my name is Goldsmith), and an unwarrantable liberty taken with the name of a young lady. As for myself, I care but little, but her name must not be sported

with." Evans denied all knowledge of the matter, and as he bent forward, Goldsmith struck him on the back with his cane. Evans was a strong man, and made for Goldsmith, when a violent scuffle ensued, in the course of which they managed to overturn a hanging lamp and pour the oil upon their ruffled tempers. Then Kenrick, the actual writer of the article, burst out from a back room, separated the combatants, and sent the valiant Goldsmith home in a cab. Captain Horneck had witnessed the strange scene dumbfounded with amazement. To prevent an action for assault from being brought, Goldsmith was obliged by Evans to pay £50 to a Welsh charity.¹

In 1770 the Hornecks went for a trip to France with Goldsmith, of all people, as escort, on the strength of his having wandered through Europe with his flute in his youth. No wonder they were in endless difficulties, as we see from Goldsmith's Letters. The Hornecks are certainly the "dear English lady-friends" whose presence in Paris induced Baretti to spend nine days there on his way to Italy that year.²

'The Hornecks' was only one of many houses which Baretti now found open to him. He was constantly at the Garricks', the Reynolds', and the Thrales'; in fact, wherever the members of the

¹ Forster's Goldsmith, bk. iv.

² To Carcano, September 26, 1770.

Literary Club went he was usually to be found, though he was not himself a member.

In 1768 he visited France and Flanders. I should have mentioned that Baretti had hardly left Italy when the Venetian Ambassador in England was ordered to have him punished on his arrival. On his answering that this was impossible, he was told to have Baretti carefully watched. So effectually were these instructions carried out that his departure for Flanders was at once reported to Venice.¹ Custodi states that Baretti went with Mr. Thrale, but gives no authority for the statement. I can find no reference to the Thrales making such a journey, and it is inconceivable that, had they done so, it should not be mentioned by Boswell or Mrs. Thrale; and almost inconceivable that they would have thought of going without Johnson. Mr. Thrale, too, would not have cared to leave his business for so long at that time. It is highly probable, however, that Baretti went as a companion to some one.

Towards the end of the same year he returned once more to Spain, in order to enlarge his somewhat meagre acquaintance with that country for the elaborate English edition of his "Journey" which he was then planning. Johnson had written to him (June 10, 1761): "I wish you had staid longer in Spain, for no country is less known to

¹ Ricciardi, "Giuseppe Baretti," etc., p. 64.

the rest of Europe; but the quickness of your discernment must make amends for the celerity of your motions." He spent some months in Madrid, where he made many friends. He was careful to go by land both ways, and not to run any risks in Portugal after the warning he had received from the Consul at Genoa. It is interesting to observe that, at a time when highway robberies and crimes of all kinds were so common, Baretti says in his "*Journey*" (ii. 266): "For my part, I never met with any robbers in my various rambles through several regions of Europe." The precautions taken on so short a journey as that from Streatham to Brighton by persons of quality can be gathered from the diaries of Madame d'Arblay and others of the time. Baretti probably never travelled in a style to tempt robbers to any extent, but highwaymen were then so numerous that they robbed rich and poor alike.

Baretti was not back in town till the middle of May 1769, where new honours awaited him. Johnson had written to him (June 10, 1761):

The Artists have instituted a yearly Exhibition of pictures and statues, in imitation, as I am told, of foreign academies. This year was the second Exhibition. They please themselves much with the multitude of spectators, and imagine that the English school will rise in reputation. Reynolds is without a rival, and continues to add thousands to

thousands, which he deserves, among other excellences, by retaining his kindness for Baretti. This Exhibition has filled the heads of the Artists and lovers of art. Surely life, if it be not long, is tedious, since we are forced to call in the assistance of so many trifles to rid us of our time, of that time which never can return.

Johnson had no appreciation of art. With his sight and his early surroundings, it would have been astonishing if he had. The exhibition in question was held in the rooms of the Society of Arts in the Strand. A Society of Artists was formed in connection with it in 1765 ; but various disputes arose, which resulted in the foundation of the Royal Academy early in 1769.

Come now ; here is some good news for you [writes Baretti to Count Bujovich on May 28, 1769]. A few days after my return from Spain, the King appointed me Secretary for Foreign Correspondence to the Royal Academy of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture, which was recently founded here by His Majesty. This honour he conferred upon me without my having raised a finger to obtain it, merely on a unanimous request being made to him by the President of the Academy and its leading members. Rejoice with me, my Cencio, and allow me to be a little elated ; the laws here are so strict and show so little favour to all who are not English, either by birth or in religion. I owe this to the credit I have gained by my book on the Manners and Customs of Italy, of which three editions have appeared, two

here and one in Dublin. In Venice, instead of heaping honours and favours on me for having written such a book, they would almost have thrown me into the Canal Orfano. What a difference between the Venetians and the English !

Sir Joshua Reynolds himself brought Baretti the news of his appointment.

There were various honorary posts of this kind—professorships, etc.—in connection with the Royal Academy. They were unpaid, and usually conferred as marks of distinction on prominent men of the day. Goldsmith, for instance, was Professor of Ancient History, and remarked, on his appointment with no salary, that the conferring of such posts on men of his condition was like giving a man ruffles when he did not possess a shirt. Baretti's appointment clearly shows the high opinion held of him by the leading men of the day, and was a real distinction, as he fully realised. It is interesting to remember that he was succeeded in the office by Boswell, a man whom he detested above all others ; and Boswell returned Baretti's dislike with interest, never losing an opportunity of speaking ill of him in the Life. Baretti's notes on the Thrale-Johnson Letters are full of hits at Boswell. In i. 384 Johnson says that Boswell "has been gay and good-humoured in his usual way," and Baretti comments, "That is, his noisy and silly way." In i. 371 he says, "He

makes more noise than anybody in company, talking and laughing aloud"; while in i. 216 he observes that he "is not quite right-headed, in my humble opinion." There are other notes to the same effect. If anything could have made Baretti turn in his grave, it would have been the thought of having such a successor.

His brothers, not unnaturally, made anxious inquiries about the salary when they heard the good news, and Baretti replied (August 6, 1769):

I expected you to ask whether there is any salary attached to my new secretarial post. Does the honour seem so small to you? What if I told you that I should refuse a salary, if one were offered me? It would do me more harm than good, for certain British reasons, which it would be a long and difficult task for me to explain to you. Nor would the honour be great were I in a salaried position. In Piedmont, however, people are not so refined in their ideas as they are here. It is enough for me that my post must necessarily bring with it a number of new friends, all of them distinguished for one reason or another.

Baretti had a right to feel proud of the position he had now won for himself in England and the ample recognition he had received; and he set to work upon his "Journey" and a revised edition of his Italian Dictionary with renewed vigour, spending his evenings with the best company, where the appearance of his book was eagerly awaited.

CHAPTER IX

THE STABBING AFFAIR IN THE HAYMARKET

OCTOBER 1769

ON Friday, the 6th [October],¹ I spent the whole day at home correcting my Italian and English Dictionary, which is actually reprinting and working off, and upon another book in four volumes [the “Journey”], which is to be published in February next, and has been advertised in the newspapers. I went, a little after four, to the Club of Royal Academicians in Soho, where I stopped about half an hour, waiting for my friends, and warming myself in the club-room. Upon no-body’s coming, I went to the Orange Coffee-house, to see if a letter was come for me, for my letters come there, but there was none.

As he was returning up the Haymarket one of the many women who frequented the street asked him to give her a glass of wine and struck him a blow which caused him great pain. She was sitting

¹ In the following account I have used Baretti’s own words as far as possible, except when the other evidence seems to contradict or supplement them. The quotations are taken partly from his own defence and partly from a letter to his brothers of October 17, in which he naturally speaks more freely than he could do in court. It is given by Morandi in “Voltaire contro Shakespeare,” etc., p. 238.

on a doorstep with another woman, Elizabeth Ward, afterwards one of the chief witnesses at the trial. Baretti took a step or two forward and then turned angrily round. Owing to the darkness and his bad sight he had not seen that there were two women, and struck Elizabeth Ward, and not his assailant, a blow on the face with his open hand, or, as she declared, with his doubled fist. She got up immediately and began to scream like one possessed, calling him every kind of name, among others “woman-hater” and “d——d Frenchman,” for she had recognised that he was a foreigner.

Three bullies now appeared upon the scene, the chief of them, Morgan, being a friend of the woman who had been struck. One of them gave Baretti a blow with his fist and asked him how he dared strike a woman, while the woman declared that he ought to have his head cloven with a patten. The three men were in a row, Morgan being farthest from Baretti: Morgan gave his companion a push, so that Patman, the last man, knocked Baretti off the pavement. “I was a Frenchman in their opinion,” says Baretti, “which made me apprehensive I must expect no favour or protection, but all outrage and blows.” Unlike most Englishmen of the day, he did not know how to use his fists. He lost his head completely, his Italian blood asserted itself, and he drew a

little fruit-knife with a silver blade which he had in his pocket, as his one means of defence, and stabbed Patman in the side, so that the blood ran down into his boots, though at the time he was not aware that he had been wounded.

Baretti—

bellowed like a bull. My voice and my knife opened the crowd on one side. I began running along Panton-street with the crowd after me. There is generally a great puddle in the centre of Panton-street, even when the weather is fine; but that day it had rained incessantly, which made it very slippery. [In the eighteenth century the kennel or gutter always ran down the centre of the street.] I could plainly perceive my assailants wanted to throw me into the puddle, where I might be trampled on; so I cried out “Murder!” I was in the greatest horror, lest I should run against some stones, as I have such bad eyes. I could not run as fast as my pursuers, so that they were upon me, continually beating and pushing me. I struck out with my knife as I fled. I wounded one under the arm-pit as he had his hand raised for a blow.¹ The crowd now shouted “Murder! He has a knife out!” He cried out, but was not heeded, and I plied my legs, as did the blackguards behind me. The most treacherous of all my assailants—and they were all thorough scoundrels, as afterwards appeared—was a man called Morgan, who made several attempts to seize me by the hair, which I wore in a tail. He beat off my hat with

¹ This is Baretti's account of the stabbing of Patman.

his fist. I gave him two blows, as I fled: the rascal, however, did not feel them, but waited for another, which brought him to the ground, groaning. I am certainly sorry for the man, but he owed his death to his own daring impetuosity.

When I was in Oxendon Street, fifteen or sixteen yards from the Haymarket, I stopped and faced about. My confusion was great, and seeing a shop open, I ran into it for protection, quite spent with fatigue, and turned upon the mob, brandishing my knife and threatening to strike any one that entered. A few minutes afterwards a constable appeared at the door of the shop with two other men, and called upon me to give myself up. I saw the constable's staff, and asked whether they were all friends, being prepared to defend myself against my infamous assailants. When they replied that they were, I put up my knife in its sheath and replaced it in my pocket, held up my hands and surrendered at once.

This was Baretti's account to his brothers, but the constable stated that, not knowing anything of Baretti, he ran in and seized him by the collar, took away the knife, which was only half sheathed, and knocked it into the sheath himself.

I begged they would send for a coach and take me to Sir John Fielding. Sir John heard what I and the men had to say. They sent me to a room below, from whence I despatched a man to the Club in Gerrard Street, when Sir Joshua Reynolds and other gentlemen came to me. A messenger was despatched to the Middlesex hospital, where the

said Morgan was carried. After two hours a surgeon came and took his oath that Morgan was in danger. I could not therefore give bail, and Sir John committed me to Tothill-fields-Bridewell.

Sir John Fielding, half-brother to the novelist, to whose post he had succeeded on the latter's death, showed great consideration for Baretti in sending him to Tothill Fields. The prison was clean and airy, even the prisoners being made to wash, and it was one of the best in London. It was primarily a debtors' prison, but there were wards for vagrants and for cases of assault and battery. Sir Joshua Reynolds and Goldsmith insisted on accompanying Baretti in the coach on his way to prison. All Goldsmith's animosity had vanished the moment he found that Baretti was in trouble. He opened his purse, and would have given him every shilling it contained. Tothill Fields was an outlying district, between Tothill Street, Pimlico, and the river. The coachman lost his way, and the whole party was obliged to alight in the darkness and find the prison as best they could on foot.

Baretti had received blows on his face and chin, as was noticed when he was at Sir John Fielding's. When the excitement had subsided, he began to feel considerable pain in various parts of his body. Two friends who visited him the next day in prison induced him to let them inspect his back, and found he was badly bruised. He did not

sleep much that night; but on the following morning, Saturday—

a large number of friends came to me, since I did not believe that I had done so much harm with a silver blade as I really had done. Every one offered to help me. My purse was examined. It proved, as usual, to be rather slender, but soon grew bulky again. On Saturday night Morgan died of his wounds. The inquest was held on him on Tuesday and Wednesday, and witnesses were examined—all worthless rascals, and all against me—before fifteen jurymen, besides the judge, who is here called the coroner. Without a single witness in my favour I was pronounced to be not guilty of wilful murder; so that the Chief Justice of the Kingdom, Lord Mansfield, accepted four securities for me on Friday morning, and I was released from jail and sent home free. My sureties are William Fitzherbert, Esq., Edmund Burke, Esq.—both Members of Parliament—with the Sir Joshua Reynolds already mentioned and the famous Garrick.¹

When they went to Lord Mansfield's house to bail out Baretti, his lordship, without paying much attention to the business, immediately and abruptly began with some very flimsy and boyish observations on the contested passage in “Othello,” “Put out the light,” etc. This was by way of showing off to Garrick,

who was not, however, in the least impressed, while Reynolds, who had never seen him before,

¹ To his brothers, October 17, 1769.

and who told Malone the story, was disappointed at finding the great lawyer so petty a man.¹

Each of the sureties was for £500. The William Fitzherbert here mentioned was intimate with Johnson and his friends.

There was no sparkle, no brilliancy in Fitzherbert; but I never knew a man who was so generally acceptable. . . . He was an instance of the truth of the observation, that a man will please more, upon the whole, by negative qualities than by positive; by never offending, than by giving a great deal of delight.²

He lived at Tissington, in Derbyshire, where Baretti had spent months with him, probably teaching his son Italian. There he had made the acquaintance of the Johnny Blockhead mentioned in the first number of the *Frusta*. In the previous year he had recommended his son to his brother Filippo (March 26) as “a quiet young man, who is going as a companion to the Duke of Newcastle on his travels.” He had been a great favourite with Baretti when a boy. His father had always treated Baretti just like any other friend, and he dined with him whenever he liked. He often lent him money, and at the time of writing the letter he owed him fifteen guineas, which he expected to be able to repay in a few

¹ Prior's Malone, p. 381.

² Hill's Boswell, iii. 148.

days. Fitzherbert hanged himself in 1772, his affairs being in great disorder.¹

Meanwhile, Baretti's misfortune had caused no little excitement among his friends, as may well be imagined. It became the talk of the town. They were not all by any means confident as to the result. When Johnson and Burke visited him in prison, they had not much comfort to offer, and told him not to hope too strongly. "Why, what can *he* fear," says Baretti, placing himself between them, "that holds two such hands as I do²?"

A fellow-countryman of his actually came to him one day, when he was in prison, to desire a letter of recommendation for the teaching of his scholars after Baretti was hanged. "You rascal!" replied Baretti, in a rage, "if I were not in *my own apartment* I would kick you downstairs directly!"³ According to Murphy and Mrs. Thrale, his mortal enemy, Boswell, actually expressed a wish that Baretti should be hanged.⁴

Lord Charlemont received the following letter from his friend Richard Griffith⁵:

LONDON, October 12th, 1769.

Your friend Baretti is in a distressed situation. He defended himself one night lately, in the street, against a strumpet and two of her bullies, who

¹ Walpole, Letters, v. 362.

⁴ Campbell's Diary, p. 52.

² Hayward's Piozzi, i. 97.

⁵ Charlemont MSS., i. 296.

³ *Ibid.*

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attacked him. He had neither stick or sword, but drew out a little silver pareing-knife for fruit, and stabbed one of the assassins who died of the wound. The others fled, and he was taken up. He has been admitted to bail with difficulty, from the idea of an Italian and a stiletto. He has a number of good friends, and the expense and irksomeness of the affair is all that can affect him.

Baretti, knowing nothing of this letter, wrote to his brothers¹ :

My old friend, Lord Charlemont, on reading of my misfortune in the papers, sent me £50 from Ireland, supposing that I might need more money than I had to help me in my trouble. English friends for me!

Early on the morning of the 7th he had sent to inform Count Scarnafigi, the Sardinian Minister, of what had happened, not because he could help him, but on account of his position. He kindly sent Baretti his compliments and condolences several times during his imprisonment. On the following Friday, the 13th, he informed the Count of his release, and received an affectionate letter in reply.² Count Scarnafigi did not remain idle, and the Marchese Caraccioli, Envoy from the King of Naples, wrote :

I think you are acquainted with a certain Baretti, a Piedmontese, a poet and a man of letters. About eight o'clock one night he was attacked by a woman

¹ November 10, 1769.

² To his brothers, October 17, 1769.

and pursued by four or five bullies. Being forced to defend himself with a silver-bladed fruit-knife, he killed one and wounded two others. The trial is now on, and the Grand Jury have called it manslaughter in self-defence. There remains the final sentence of the Jury, the twelve *Pares Curiae*, but it will probably agree with the other. . . . Poor Baretti is fretting and wondering whether the news will not anger his relations in Italy, who know nothing of English customs. Hence I have been requested to write the truth to some of my friends, while Count Scarnafigi has also promised to write to Signor Raiberti. You cannot imagine the number of people of the highest distinction in literature, art, and politics, including some of the most eminent Members of Parliament, who have gone to give evidence in his favour, speaking so highly of his character that the trial is a veritable triumph.¹

On the 17th Baretti wrote his brothers the interesting letter from which I have already quoted freely. He had then been out of prison for five days, and the four nights in his own bed had done much to restore him.

In three, four, or five days [he continues] the formal trial will take place before Lord Mansfield, Chief Justice of the Realm, when I shall appear as the accused. There will be twelve jurymen, and they must be unanimous in their verdict, whether they declare me guilty or not guilty. If not guilty, all will be over. If guilty, I shall

¹ Piccioni, "Studi e ricerche," p. 401.

die two days later, and shall contrive to die as a brave man, conscious of his innocence, should die. I have good reason to hope for a favourable verdict, but cannot feel sure, since human judgments are only human judgments. But I have such confidence both in my own innocence and in the generosity of this nation, that in spite of the worthless wretches of witnesses, who will be bitterly hostile to me in their evidence, I have already decided, contrary to the advice of all the Italians here, to renounce the privilege of having six of my own countrymen among the twelve jurymen. My life would not be in the least danger were I to leave matters in the hands of my own countrymen ; but I wish to get off not merely with my life, but with my honour unspotted. Perhaps I shall regret my decision, but I have made up my mind and I mean to run the great risk.

The line to be adopted in the defence was an interesting point, and a consultation of his friends was held at the house of Mr. Cox, the solicitor, one evening before the trial. Among those present were Burke and Johnson, who differed in their views about the defence.

When the meeting was over, Steevens observed that the question between himself and his friend had been agitated with rather too much warmth. “ It may be so, sir,” replied the Doctor, “ for Burke and I should have been of one opinion, if we had had no audience.”¹

¹ Hill’s Boswell, iv. 324.

It was generally thought that Baretti was aided in his defence by Johnson and Murphy, but one day, at the Thrales', he claimed it as his own in the presence of them both, saying, “The public knew I had a mind ; it became necessary I should exert myself for my reputation, and therefore I drew up my defence the night preceding my trial.”¹

The date of the trial was fixed for Friday, the 20th, and Johnson and Boswell discussed it the night before, at Johnson’s house.²

“ Why, there’s Baretti,” said Johnson, “ who is to be tried for his life to-morrow ; friends have risen up for him on every side ; yet if he should be hanged, none of them will eat a slice of plum-pudding the less. Sir, that sympathetic feeling goes a very little way in depressing the mind.”

I told him that I had dined lately at Foote’s, who shewed me a letter which he had received from Tom Davies, telling him that he had not been able to sleep, from the concern he felt on account of “ *This sad affair of Baretti*,” begging of him to try if he could suggest any thing that might be of service ; and at the same time recommending to him an industrious young man who kept a pickle-shop.

JOHNSON : Ay, sir, here you have a specimen of human sympathy ; a friend hanged, and a cucumber pickled. We know not whether Baretti or the pickle-man has kept Davies from sleep : nor does he know himself. And as to his not

¹ *Eur. Mag.*, vol. xvi. p. 92.

² Hill’s *Boswell*, ii. 95.

sleeping, sir, Tom Davies is a very great man ; Tom has been upon the stage, and knows how to do those things. I have not been upon the stage, and cannot do those things.

BOSWELL : I have often blamed myself, sir, for not feeling for others as sensibly as many say they do.

JOHNSON : Sir, don't be duped by them any more. You will find these very feeling people are not very ready to do you good. They *pay* you by *feeling*.

The trial took place at the Old Bailey. "Never," says Boswell, "did such a constellation of genius enlighten the awful Sessions House, emphatically called Justice Hall." The evidence for the prosecution was first heard, and though the witnesses were obviously eager to do Baretti all the harm they could, their story practically confirmed his own.

COURT : Mr. Baretti, the evidence is now gone through that they have produced against you, in regard to the crime of which you stand charged. It is now your time, if you choose, to say anything in your own defence, or if you think proper, you may leave it to your counsel to call witnesses.

MR. BARETTI : I have wrote something concerning this accident. I do not know whether it is proper to read it.

COURT : You certainly may be permitted to speak or read anything you have wrote. I suppose you mean it as a history of the fact ?

MR. BARETTI : Yes.

Baretti then read his account of what happened, from which I have already quoted freely, and then continued as follows :

This, my Lord and Gentlemen of the Jury, is the best account I can give of my unfortunate accident : for what is done in two or three minutes, in fear and terror, is not to be minutely described ; and the Court and the Jury are to judge, and I hope your Lordship, and every person present, will think that a man of my age, character, and way of life, would not spontaneously quit my pen to engage in an outrageous tumult. I hope it will easily be conceived, that a man almost blind could not but be seized with terror on such a sudden attack as this. I hope it will be seen, that my knife was neither a weapon of offence or defence : I wear it to carve fruit and sweetmeats, and not to kill my fellow-creatures. It is a general custom in France, not to put knives upon the table, so that even ladies wear them in their pockets for general use. I have continued to wear it after my return, because I have found it occasionally convenient. Little did I think such an event would ever have happened. Let this trial turn out as favourable as my innocence may deserve, still my regret will last as long as life shall last. A man who has lived full fifty years, and has spent most of that time in a studious manner, I hope will not be supposed to have voluntarily engaged in so desperate an affair. I beg leave, my Lord and Gentlemen, to add one thing more. Equally confident of my own innocence and English discernment to trace out truth, I did resolve to

waive the privilege granted to foreigners by the laws of this nation ; my motive was my life and honour ; that it should not be thought I received undeserved favour from a jury, part of my own country ; I chose to be tried by a jury of this country ; for if my honour is not saved, I cannot much wish for the preservation of my life. I will wait for the determination of this awful Court with that confidence, I hope, which innocence has a right to obtain. So God bless you all.

Evidence was then given as to the wounds and bruises upon Baretti, and Justice Kelynge, Mr. Perrin, and Major Alderton deposed that they had been attacked in a most indecent manner by abandoned women in the Haymarket, who were attended by bullies. The evidence for character was then called.

HON. MR. BEAUCLERK : In France they never lay anything upon the table but a fork, not only in the inns, but in public houses. It is usual for gentlemen and ladies to carry knives with them, without silver blades. I have seen those kind of knives in toy shops.

QUESTION : How long have you known Mr. Baretti ?

HON. MR. BEAUCLERK : I have known him ten years. I was acquainted with him before I went abroad. Some time after that I went to Italy, and he gave me letters of recommendation to some of the first people there. I went to Italy, the time the Duke of York did. Unless Mr. Baretti had

been a man of consequence, he could never have recommended me to such people as he did. He is a gentleman of letters, and a studious man.

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS: I have known Mr. Baretti fifteen or sixteen years. He is a man of great humanity and very active in endeavouring to help his friends. I have known many instances of it. He is a gentleman of a good temper; I never knew him quarrelsome in my life. He is of a sober disposition; he never drank any more than three glasses in my company. I never heard of his being in passions or quarrelling. This affair was on a club night of the Royal Academicians. We expected him there, and were enquiring about him, before we heard of this accident. Mr. Baretti is Secretary for Foreign Correspondence.

Then came Dr. Johnson, who, says Boswell, gave his evidence in a slow, distinct manner, which was uncommonly impressive.

DOCTOR JOHNSON: I believe I began to be acquainted with Mr. Baretti about the year '53 or '54. I have been intimate with him. He is a man of literature and a very studious man, a man of great diligence. He gets his living by study. I have no reason to think he was ever disordered with liquor in his life. A man that I never knew to be otherwise than peaceable, and a man that I take to be rather timorous.

QUESTION: Was he addicted to pick up women in the street?

DR. JOHNSON: I never knew that he was.

QUESTION : How is he as to his eye-sight ?

DR. JOHNSON : He does not see me now, nor I do not see him. I do not believe he could be capable of assaulting any body in the street, without great provocation.

WILLIAM FITZHERBERT, Esq. : I have known him fourteen or fifteen years. He is a man of as good a character as ever I knew any body ; a peaceable man ; a man that I always chose to have in my family. He has been in the summer in the country with my family for months together. I never saw any thing exceptionable by him in any kind whatever.

EDMUND BURKE, Esq. : I have known him between three and four years ; he is an ingenious man, a man of remarkable humanity ; a thorough good-natured man.

DAVID GARRICK, Esq. : I was not very intimate with Mr. Baretti till about the year '54, though I knew him before. I never knew a man of a more active benevolence. He did me all the civility he could do to a stranger, as indeed he did so to every Englishman that came in the course of my acquaintance with him. When I was at Paris,¹ I was very inquisitive about men of literature. I asked who they thought was the best writer in their language ; they told me Mr. Baretti. He is a man of great probity and morals. I have a very particular instance of his great friendship to me. Mrs. Garrick got a lameness, and we tried every method in order for a remedy to no purpose ; and Mr. Baretti was the person that restored her.

¹ This must be a mistake for Padua. Cp. Baretti's letter to Garrick on p. 146.

QUESTION: Look at that knife. (He takes it in his hand.)

MR. GARRICK: I cannot say I ever saw one with a silver sheaf before. I had one, but I have lost mine. Mrs. Garrick has one now, with a steel blade, and gold.

QUESTION: When you travel abroad, do you carry such knives as this?

MR. GARRICK: Yes, or we should have no victuals.

DR. GOLDSMITH: I have had the honour of Mr. Baretti's company at my chambers in the Temple; he is a most humain, benevolent, peaceable man. I have heard him speak with regard to these poor creatures in the street, and he has got some in the hospital, who have had bad distempers. I have known him three years. He is a man of as great humanity as any in the world.

DOCTOR HALIFAX: Mr. Baretti is a man extremely affable in his temper, and quite a good-natured man.

There were divers other gentlemen in court to speak for his character, but the court thought it needless to call them.

The Jury acquitted him, and brought in their verdict, self-defence; but the judge thought fit to caution Baretti before dismissing him.¹ He also received back the knife with which he had defended himself so successfully, and Mrs. Thrale relates that he long afterwards called attention to

¹ From the Sessional Reports of the Proceedings, etc., held at Justice-Hall in the Old-Bailey for 1769, pp. 423-32.

his pocket-knife, while using it at dessert in her house, as being the one with which he had killed the unfortunate Morgan.¹

Many thought Baretti was lucky to be acquitted, and a writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine*,² whom Baretti thought to be John Bowle, an enemy of his, considers that if he had been an Englishman he would not have escaped so easily. Yet it is hard to see what other verdict was possible, though there is always a strong feeling against the use of a knife upon unarmed assailants in England, and without his powerful friends it might possibly have gone hard with him. Bowle also declared that when Johnson was afterwards criticised for his defence of Baretti, he replied that he was not alone in that affair. "Your conduct was no better," he was answered, "for that circumstance, unless you would have been guided by your fellow-deponents in everything else."³ This criticism must have been a joke, for Johnson certainly said nothing that was not justified by all we know of Baretti, though he naturally emphasised his remarks under the circumstances.

A version of the whole story in "ottava rima" was composed by an admiring great-nephew of Baretti and published, with a Life, at Turin in 1857.

¹ Fanny Burney, "Early Diary," i. 23.

² After Baretti's death, Bowle denied the charge in *Gent. Mag.*, vol. lx. p. 1127.

³ Tolondron, p. 127.

LETTERS TO LORD CHARLEMONT 221

On the very day of the trial Griffith wrote off to Lord Charlemont¹:

LONDON, *October 20th, 1769.*

I have the pleasure to inform you that our friend Baretti has been honourably acquitted this day. He had the benefit of the sentimental toast—“Many friends, and no need of them.” I expect the same paragraph, from your lordship, with regard to our amiable and worthy friend, and I expect it from your lordship, as he is but a negligent correspondent, at best, and that in the present circumstance, it would not be proper for him to write anything upon the subject.

Very shortly afterwards Baretti also wrote him the following letter²:

LONDON, *October 25th, 1769.*

Doubtless the public papers have apprized your lordship of the dreadful adventure I met with on the 6th instant: the very day, I think, that I received your kind letter. During a fortnight, you may well imagine, my lord, that I could not easily turn my thoughts to any other thing but the danger of losing by a jury that life which had wonderfully escaped a band of ruffians. Yet, however great my apprehensions, I think that my friends had no fault to find with my fortitude. Your lordship must know by this time that my confidence was not frustrated in the least, and that I have been honourably acquitted after a tryal of nearly five hours. The audience was so perfectly satisfied of my innocence, that the verdict was echoed with a general shout of approbation.

¹ Charlemont MSS., i. 296.

² *Ibid.*, i. 297.

Immediately after the tryal, I would have given due thanks to your lordship for your friendly expressions ; but the agitation of my mind had not yet subsided enough to permit me the free use of my pen. I am sure you will easily pardon this dilatoriness. I thank you now with all my heart, and ardently wish to see your lordship on this side of the water, and talk a while over this subject, which you will own to have been much more interesting to me than my or Mr. Sharp's nonsense about Italian customs and manners. What would I have given to see Lord Charlemont amongst my friends upon this occasion ? A great deal indeed ! However those I had about me did their part so well, that they have made me an Englishman for ever. I am sure I will be buried in due time under that very ground which is trod by so many generous men.

I give your lordship the warmest thanks for your present, which, as you may well imagine, could never be better timed. My friends here were not wanting in pecuniary assistance on the late unfortunate accident ; yet I had remained for a while quite penniless without my oldest British friend on the other side [of] St. George's Channel. Thank you, thank you a thousand times. I am recovering from the shock this ugly transaction gave me, and I hope I shall be able soon to recollect my scattered thoughts, and mind my book as usual. I am sure that by this time your kind anxiety is quite over. When shall I see your lordship again ?¹

¹ Charlemont MSS., ii. 359.

The relief to Baretti must have been very great, for though he obviously expected to be acquitted, the nervous strain of the ordeal was trying in the extreme. But the trial was a triumph, as the Sardinian Minister said ; and it is not surprising to find Baretti gratified beyond measure at the result, which he calls very fortunate, as it will increase his reputation.

On November 9 and 10 he wrote to his brothers from Sterlingfordbury :

After my misfortune, various friends offered me their country houses, and I went and tried two of them for a few days with Capitolo ; but in none of them could I find the solitude I require for the next month, and I have at last chosen this as the best. This place is a Rectory, as they call it here, or a Cure, as we should say, and the Rector or Curé is a Mr. Cholmondeley, younger son of a Peer of the Realm, a great friend of mine, who intends to pass the whole winter here quite alone. I propose to spend three or four weeks with him, working at my “Travels in Spain,” and resting my brain in the quiet of the country after all the excitement I have been through during the last month. My host is a man of about fifty, a good clergyman, according to the ideas of this country, cheerful, hospitable, and as fond of good books as he is of a good table.

I have not given my speech to the judge and jury to any one [he wrote to Filippo on December 26]. What was printed in the papers here is a poor per-

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formance by a man who took it down in shorthand while I spoke, so that it is naturally mutilated and imperfect, and in some places says just the opposite to what I really said. I am sorry that such rubbish has been translated at home and is being circulated there. Some day I shall write an account of the whole affair, containing some strange stories, which will give a better idea of the characters of the various classes of this nation than anything that has yet appeared in our tongue. But at present I have other things to do.

It is a pity that Baretti never carried out this intention.

CHAPTER X

A FLYING VISIT HOME AND THE FINAL RETURN TO ENGLAND

1770—1773

THE long-expected “Journey from London to Genoa” was at last published by Davies (who gave the author £500 for it) in 1770, and achieved an instant success. It was dedicated to “the President and Members of the Royal Academy of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture.” Baretti had shown that he could write an entertaining book in his “Manners and Customs of Italy.” His reputation had been largely increased by his trial, and, moreover, no good account of Spain had as yet appeared in English, so that its success was not to be wondered at. Mrs. Thrale wrote to Johnson (July 17, 1770):

Mr. Baretti’s book shows that he has been employed among more entertaining papers: ’tis a most pleasing performance, and meets with eager readers in our house: even Mrs. —— is sure that such a gentleman must *keep a carriage*, though not so fine a one, no sure, as Mr. Thrale’s.

Upon this Baretti comments :

Poor Baretti would be very glad to have a carriage while he scribbles these notes with the gout in his feet ; but unluckily never could keep one : yet, who cares ?

Johnson replied from Ashbourne :

That Baretti's book would please you all I made no doubt. I know not whether the world has ever seen such travels before. Those whose lot it is to ramble can seldom write, and those who know how to write very seldom ramble.

The book deserved the high praise it received, as may be judged from the extract already given.

Meanwhile, Baretti was not neglecting his friends.

The other day Lavi, our king's miniature painter, arrived. I have already introduced him to Angelica, the paintress, and to Sir Joshua Reynolds, our President. I shall also introduce him to the other principal members of our Academy, and on New Year's Day shall take him with me to the Academy dinner, as I can bring a guest. In fact, I shall sink him up to the neck among people of his own profession. When a hard-working Piedmontese arrives, I am only too glad to help him to the best of my ability.¹

Angelica is, of course, Angelica Kauffmann, who was one of the original thirty-six members of the Academy. She was enormously admired

¹ To Filippo, December 26, 1769.

in England, and it is probably owing largely to her personal charms that her work was so highly thought of by her contemporaries.

In 1770 he wrote letters to his brothers, and to Count Bujovich in Venice, on behalf of “a good friend of mine, Mr. Burney, who is a Professor of music, to which he is passionately devoted, and is going to Italy in order to write a general history of that art.” He was also taking a miniature of Baretti with him to Count Bujovich.¹

Dr. Burney saw one of the brothers in Turin.

Signor Baretti [*sic*], of this place, in consequence of a letter from his brother in London, received me very politely, and took great pains to be useful to me while I remained at Turin; he introduced me to Padre Beccaria, for whom, at first sight, I conceived the highest regard and veneration.²

This admiration for Beccaria can hardly have pleased Baretti. Dr. Burney made his tour in 1770, starting some months earlier than Baretti.

His success in England, the numerous honours he had received, and his present wealth, not unnaturally made Baretti wish to return to his native country, where he had endured so many failures, and enjoy the pleasure of appearing as a successful man among his friends, and still more among his enemies. He was also eager to

¹ To Bujovich, June 2, 1770.

² Burney, “The Present State of Music in France and Italy,” p. 75.

repay his brothers some of the money they had so often lent him in person, and he was probably drawn on by the old will-o'-the-wisp of possible employment at home. He therefore left London on August 4, spent a few days in Paris with the Hornecks, went straight through to Turin, where he had two interesting conversations on English affairs with the Duke of Savoy, then to Casale and Valenza, near which place his brothers were farming a large estate leased to them by the Municipality of Valenza.

After spending a few days with them, he hastened on to Genoa, of which his friend Giambattista Negroni was at that time Doge. Baretti had promised to stay with him as long as he was in office. From Genoa he wrote that he was waiting for news from England to know whether it would be possible for him to spend a winter, as he longed to do, in a less rheumatic place than London. His friends in Milan urged him to visit them, but he declined, as we have seen, on account of his old love-affair there. He found that they were still busy producing their reams of verse, and they could not understand his lack of interest in their work. "The fact is," he wrote, "that you and half a million more of my countrymen mistake verse-making for poetry, though they are two very different things."

He had a pleasant winter in Genoa, and was

asked out everywhere. He played ombre and whist regularly in the evenings, and won enough to pay both for a new velvet and a new silk coat.

When he left London he had agreed with Davies to bring out a new translation of “*Don Quixote*”; but he soon found the task impossible for him; whereupon Davies proposed that he should write an account of Sardinia in one volume, and a description of the whole coast of Italy in three, offering him one hundred and twenty-five guineas per volume. Baretti replied that on the receipt of a hundred guineas for expenses he would go to Sardinia at once and then hire a feluca to coast round Italy.¹ The plan fell through, we are not told why; but Baretti worked hard during the winter. The Doge’s death while in office cast a gloom over his stay, and he was not sorry to return once more to England in the spring after a trip to Florence, where he joined some English friends he had made in Genoa. In 1775 he told Campbell that he could not enjoy his own country when he returned there, and felt obliged to come back to London, to those connections he had been making for some thirty years past; and Baretti himself wrote to Bicetti (May 5, 1776):

I dislike Turin, and the other towns in Pied-

¹ To his brothers, December 11, 1770.

mont would seem utterly dead to me. Here I am accustomed to keep the best company among all classes. How dull I should find it to be obliged to live among our countrymen and, what is worse, our countrywomen, with their ignorance, their horrid manner, and their boundless superstition ! I tried it eight years ago, but could not endure it a month. So I came back to my nest here, came back to begin all over again ; and here I must stay to the end, in spite of the climate, which suits me none too well, and in spite of other discomforts I have to put up with.

Both this letter and Campbell's story show Baretti's contempt for chronology—in both cases he adds to the tale of years.

The huge profits from his last two books had raised his hopes high, and he doubtless had golden dreams of vast sums to be made in the future. He was of far too sanguine a temperament to realise that the success of his "Journey" was due to quite exceptional circumstances which were not likely to recur. He returned to England through France, crossing from Dieppe to Bright-helmstone with a friend of his, a Colonel, with whom he was travelling. After spending a few days with this friend at Fareham, he returned to London, where he arrived about the end of April 1771.

He soon took up his old life again, and has left us a description of it in a letter to Carcano of April 20, 1770.

I generally get up at eight, when I am shaved and powdered. After drinking tea with a friend, I sit down at my desk and write as a rule till three or four in the afternoon. Then I either dine alone with a friend, often with other people who come in about that time, or else I dine out. About six o'clock I drink tea again, always at somebody else's house and in the company of clever, beautiful women and girls. Then I play at quadrille the whole evening every day, supping where I have been spending the evening, after which we drink tea and chatter till past eleven. The houses I frequent are numerous, and would be more numerous did I wish it. My familiarity with English ways and my Italian gaiety—which is usually, I might almost say always, greater here than in Italy—makes people readily open their doors to me. Blessed England! Rascals are as plentiful here as they are in any other country; but good people abound here in a proportion about thirty times as great as in other countries. Come and see for yourself, and you will soon realise that I am speaking the truth.

He was now engaged upon an edition of Machiavelli in three volumes quarto, collating the text and writing a preface, and upon an elaborate edition of "Don Quixote," with the text on one side and the translation on the other. For the former he received fifty guineas, while for the latter he was to have two hundred and fifty. In addition to these, he published a selection of

passages from leading English, French, Italian, and Spanish authors, each passage appearing in all four languages ; and this brought him in a hundred and twenty-five guineas. He made money rapidly, but he had to work hard for it, as he complains to Lord Charlemont in the following letter :¹

LONDON, *February 25th, 1772.*

I thank you for your kind condescension in apologising, when there was not the shadow of a necessity for any apology ; and I forbear making a necessary one for my delay in telling your lordship that I have executed your commissions, least I should be thought so confident as to presume to pay you in kind, and give you tit for tat, as the saying is. However, it is an indisputable fact that I have a deal of work to dispatch every day : that is a couple of devils (printer's devils) to deliver myself from very regularly twice a day, Sundays excepted ; and twelve pages of “ *Don Quixote*,” if not fourteen, to translate every day ; and almost every day many letters to write in many languages ; so that your lordship would certainly commiserate the poor drudge, could you form a just idea of my incessant fatigues. See here, my Lord, what callosities I have upon this thumb of mine, and got by my continual squeezing of a pen ! But, quoth Lord Charlemont, why do you, my old friend, work so very hard ? A pretty question indeed, my good lord, why I work ? Faith, for no other reason, but because I hate work, and want to be idle. What other motive could I have, since idleness is the

¹ Charlemont MSS., i. 309.

very blank at which diligence and industry are for ever aiming ?

Coming now back to speak of my dear self, I must for once, and very gravely, expostulate with your lordship as to that oblique, but degrading accusation, of my being little less than apathetically indifferent about politics. Jesus ! Jesus ! how wrong and unjust these lords are apt to be, when they take it into their heads so to be ! Is such an accusation to be brought against a man, who has for these four months past been impairing his sight, wearing out his thumbs, and exhausting his patience in diligently collating half a dozen editions of Machiavel's works, in order to strike out a new one in three enormous quartos ? Come forth of thy back shop, thou, Tom Davies, bookseller de misos pecados, thou who has paid me so very few guineas for so great a labour ! Come forth to bear witness against this lord, as how I have been, and am still, sunk in the very deepest abyss of politics Machiavellian. Was not Machiavel the identical bellwether of all and every one of the political flock ? The first, the best, the damnedest of them all ? and how can I be taxed with indifference about politics, who am now invested, by bookseller's authority, with the power of supervising, ushering, and kicking the chief code of that science into a new edition, and am actually doing it ? However, though a thorough politician, I will be so far honest as to own that there was a time, when I was somewhat tainted with doctrines unsound. For instance, there was a time, when my notion of liberty (and liberty is the axis round which all manners of

politics turn) when my notion of liberty was, that any native of any land was a freeman, provided he had wherewithal to fill his guts after his own taste, together with a tolerable share of prudence. . . . There was a time, my lord, when I thought that a bastard kind of liberty, that did permit a multitude of Catos, Brutuses, Senecas, and Socrates's to call Johnson an hireling, Warburton an atheist, Burke a Jesuit, Mansfield an ass, Wilkes a saint, and "Junius" the saviour of his country. . . . A multitude of such erroneous notions I own to have once fostered in my foolish pate. But my long meditations upon Machiavel, together with a careful perusal of Algernon Sidney's works, and Molesworth's Account of Denmark, have turned me into so genuine a liberty-man, that I now think it very pretty to curse a king's mother when dead, after having poured upon her all kinds of abuse when alive. I push even so far the liberality of my new notions, that, though I know nothing of my queen, I am vastly pleased when I listen to a ballad, as I go along, in which a fair queen is called a damned — without the least ceremony. Huzza, my boys ! Wilkes and liberty for ever ! and a plague upon my former apathy about polities !

He still occasionally had fits of home-sickness, engendered partly by the endless work he was forced to do.

I do not think I shall spend more than two years at the outside in England, because, my friend, my hair is beginning to turn white, and I am getting stout, and all this work is becoming too much for

me. So I think of returning home and spending my few remaining years in quiet retirement. I must tell you that, while passing through Lyons on my way back to England last time, I bought a picture that took my fancy for twenty louis. Carriage included, it cost me less than £40, and on New Year's Day I sold it for £150. You can add up the amount of money I have made during the seven or eight months I have been back.¹

In fact, Baretti was probably wealthier now than at any other period in his whole life.

He also seems to have made a new friend about this time.

I must tell you, there is a girl here who is the greatest of all my pets since I have been in England. [Of how many girls did Baretti say the same in his day?] She is neither ugly nor advancing in years. Her goodness is exemplary, and she possesses a simple, frank, and transparently open character. She has a dowry of nearly £4,000 absolutely in her own right, and only a few distant relations, whom she hardly knows. I live with her like a brother. I am her first, nay, her only confidant. I know everything that concerns her—I might almost say, her every thought. I can pass as much time as I like with her in perfect intimacy; I can take her hand when I like and give her a kiss, as I often do, whenever I like. I go with her for a drive or a walk when I choose, just as if she were my sister. All that I have I would give her, were she to ask me for it, and I think I might have all that she has, did

¹ To Bujovich, February 14, 1772.

I want it. . . . Yet I should never want to take her for my wife, even if she begged me to do so—a supposition which is, of course, quite out of the question.¹

His brothers' affairs were not prospering, and they had proposed to pay him a visit. Baretti answered that, though he should be glad to see them, he did not think it could be a success.

You are all three too old to learn the language, and you would soon find that, unless you can converse freely with every one, there can be no amusement in this world, and no country can prove agreeable, however excellent it may be.

If they did not talk English, they could practically go nowhere, as English people will speak their own language at home. French would be useless. He urges them to wait a few months longer, when he hopes to be able to send them something.²

In another letter he writes that he has been down with a nasty fever, and now it appeared that he was to suffer from the gout. Luckily it had only attacked his left hand and his feet so far, leaving his right hand free. If he were only one of the fine gentlemen who could sit “pro tribunali” in a big armchair and enjoy it at his ease, there would be nothing but the pain to complain of ; but it is different for a man who has to earn his bread by his pen and spend many hours daily at his desk.³

¹ To Filippo, October 23, 1772. ² *Ibid.*, October 28, 1770.

³ *Ibid.*, August 14, 1772.

CHAPTER XI

THE THRALES

A GREAT change was now to take place in Baretti's life. In October 1773 he was induced by Dr. Johnson, against his better judgment, as he afterwards declared, though with how much truth it is difficult to say, to undertake the education of Mr. Thrale's eldest daughter in modern languages. In later years he used to tell his friends that it was not want of money that made him accept the offer, as he had recently received the £500 for his "Journey."¹ But this was one of Baretti's after-thoughts. He had spent this, as we have seen, long ago, and more besides. The chief inducement held out to him by Johnson for going to Mr. Thrale's was that a man of his wealth would be sure to make him handsome presents and to pension him finally when his task was done. He was not to be in the position of a regular tutor, but was to come and go as he liked ; and he still kept on his room in town.

Johnson had been introduced to the Thrales

¹ *Gent. Mag.*, vol. lix. p. 470.

by Murphy, who was one of their oldest and dearest friends, in 1765, or, according to Mrs. Thrale, in 1764. He dined with them, and was so much pleased with his reception, both by Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, and they were so delighted with his conversation, in spite of his peculiarities, that his visits to their house became more and more frequent, till at last he became a regular member of the family with a room of his own, both in their house at Southwark and their villa at Streatham. Henry Thrale, as is well known, was owner of the famous brewery in Southwark, afterwards sold to Messrs. Barclay & Perkins, which occupied the site of the still more famous Globe Theatre, for ever connected with the name of Shakespeare. It was opened with “Henry V.” in 1599. Whether the house or the brewery occupied the site is not quite certain. Thrale himself, though the son of a self-made man, had been admirably educated. His father had helped him to associate with the Grenvilles, Lytteltons, and Pitts, to whom he lent money and they lent assistance of every other kind. He was bred up at Stowe and Stoke and Oxford and every fashionable place. He was a fine, handsome man, if cold and reserved.

His wife was a Miss Hester Lynch Salusbury, of a very good Welsh family. The marriage had been greatly against her inclinations, as there was

no love on either side. He was far more attentive to her mother than to herself during his courtship, and she afterwards discovered that he had proposed to two ladies before herself, but had been refused by both, as they were women of the *ton* and flatly declined to ruin their social prospects by making Deadman's Place, Southwark, their town residence. Mr. Thrale, be it said to his credit, took a keen interest in his business, and according to Johnson his chief ambition in life was to out-brew Whitbread, though he was often most unwise in the methods he employed for effecting his purpose. Hence he insisted on living near his work when in town. Once married, however, Mr. Thrale made a kinder husband than might have been expected. But his wife led a secluded life. "For the first six years after my marriage, as you know, I never set foot in any theatre or place of entertainment at all."¹ She was not allowed to have anything to do with the kitchen, and never knew what was for dinner till she saw it on the table before her. In this Mr. Thrale showed his sense. Eating was one of his principal pleasures in life, and he knew better than to let the control of the kitchen out of his own hands. "Johnson told me once," she says in her Story of her Life, "before *her* [her mother's] face, who deeply did resent it, that I

¹ Thrale-Johnson Letters, i. 254.

lived like my husband's kept mistress—shut from the world, its pleasures or its cares."

Gradually, however, things changed for the better. Murphy became a regular visitor, and made a point of bringing all the most interesting of his numerous friends to the house. Arthur Murphy—dear Mur, as Johnson called him—was, in fact, the life of the whole family. He was a good actor, who wrote some amusing comedies, as well as a lawyer and a man of considerable learning and a brilliant conversationalist. His translation of Tacitus was the best in its day, and his *Essay on the Life and Genius of Samuel Johnson* is a work of permanent value. No wonder he was a welcome guest wherever he went.

Those who once came to Streatham found every inducement to come again. The table was famous in those days of solid food, for Thrale, if not a "gourmet" as we understand the word, was a voracious eater. Neither his friends nor his medical advisers could induce him to eat in moderation. Baretti says that he ate like four and that his hearty dinners contributed much to his death.¹ Campbell has actually preserved for us the menu for March 25, 1775, when he says the dinner was excellent.

The first course, soup at head and foot removed by fish and a saddle of mutton; second course,

¹ On Thrale-Johnson Letters, ii. 70.

a fowl they call *Galaena* [probably a guinea-fowl] at head, and a capon larger than some of our Irish turkeys at foot ; third course, four different sorts of ices, pine-apple, grape, raspberry, and a fourth : in each remove there were, I think, fourteen dishes. The two first courses were served in massy plate.

On this occasion there were ten or more gentlemen present, and only one lady besides Mrs. Thrale.

Streatham Place itself was a very fine villa. It stood in a hundred acres of well-wooded ground with nearly two miles of gravel path. The kitchen gardens were very large, surrounded by walls fourteen feet high, while there were extensive conservatories, with an endless supply of grapes, peaches, nectarines, and pine-apples. The Place itself was a roomy, three-storied white house, and stood in the centre of a fine paddock, which was separated from the rest of the grounds by a ha-ha, or sunk fence, and drawbridge, after the fashion of the period. It was situated on the south side of the lower common between Streatham and Tooting, and was pulled down in 1863.¹

Saturday evening [says Fanny Burney²] Mr. and Mrs. Thrale took me quite round the paddock, and showed me their hothouses, kitchen-gardens, etc. Their size and their contents are astonishing ; but we have not once missed a pine-apple since I came, and therefore you can imagine their abundance ; besides grapes, melons, peaches, nectarines, and ices.

¹ D'Arblay, *Diary*, i. 53, with Austin Dobson's note. ² *Ibid.*, i. 139.

“When she is in the country,” writes Baretti,¹ “Mrs. Thrale spends much time in the company of her countless chickens and turkeys and geese and ducks, of which she always has a number.” In fact, she was a thorough Englishwoman who loved her chicken-yard, visiting it regularly after breakfast, as well as her dogs, of which there were always several about, often causing annoyance to her guests. Johnson used to blame her for “feeding the chickens till she starved her understanding”; but then Johnson hated the country, once remarking that “after one has gathered the apples in an orchard, one wishes them well baked, and removed to a London eating-house for enjoyment.” Besides, when he could not leave town, he preferred to have Mrs. Thrale near him in the Borough. The chickens played quite a part in the life at Streatham. “It was one of the Streatham whims,” says Baretti,² “to call the cocks and hens by the name of some acquaintance or other of the family, and so we roasted Johnson to-day and boiled Baretti or somebody else to-morrow”; and we continually find allusions in Johnson’s letters like the following, referring to Hetty Thrale: “I hope she takes great care of my hen, and the Guinea hen, and her pretty little brood.”

¹ To Amedeo, January 1776.

² On Thrale-Johnson Letters, i. 238.

But it is high time we gave some account of the heads of the establishment. Mr. Thrale was a proud, strong-willed, resolute man, who felt confidence enough in his own strength to be able to receive so dominating a tyrant as Johnson under his roof without weakening his authority. Johnson had the greatest respect for him. “I know no man,” he told Boswell, “who is more master of his wife and family than Thrale. If he holds up a finger he is obeyed.” Even Mrs. Thrale admits in her “*Anecdotes*” that “Mr. Thrale had a very powerful influence over Dr. Johnson, and could make him suppress many rough answers. He could likewise prevail on him to change his shirt, his coat, or his plate, almost before it became indispensably necessary to the comfort of his friends.” One is reminded that, with reference to Smart’s madness, Johnson wrote: “Another charge was that he did not love clean linen; and I have no passion for it.” “There, there,” Thrale would say, “now we have had enough for one lecture, Dr. Johnson. We will not be upon education any more till after dinner, if you please.” It was doubtless by his orders that a servant met Johnson at the parlour door with a fresh wig when dinner was announced, and changed it when he went to bed. It was not for nothing that Johnson playfully called his host “my master.” Baretti says that at Streatham Johnson got the habit of rising as early

as other folks, nor ever made Mr. Thrale stay a single moment for his breakfast, knowing that his business called him away from the breakfast-table about ten every morning, except Sundays.¹

According to his wife, Mr. Thrale had been a gay, talking man up to 1760; but financial and other troubles had made him moody and silent, so that we find little of his conversation recorded by Boswell or Fanny Burney. Boswell, indeed, says that he “has the wits much about his house, but he is not one himself”; but Johnson told Boswell that “it is a great mistake to suppose that she is above him in literary attainments. She is more flippant, but he has ten times her learning.” On another occasion he described her learning as that of a schoolboy in one of the lower forms.

But the chief attraction to the literary and other guests at Streatham was undoubtedly Mrs. Thrale, who was a woman of real ability, in spite of her faults, and of great social talent. It was said of her that into whatever company she fell, she could be the most agreeable person in it. Her learning, it is true, was not regular and exact, for the French, Spanish, Italian, and Latin in her various publications are frequently incorrect and her English slipshod; but she was perfectly familiar with these languages and very ready in

¹ *Eur. Mag.*, xiv. 93.

them, and had also some knowledge of Hebrew and Greek. Boswell was jealous of her, owing to her intimacy with Johnson, and delights in recording everything Johnson may have said in criticism of her ; but her wit and her quickness are proved by many stories. “ Mary Aston,” said Johnson, “ was a beauty and a scholar and a wit and a Whig ; and she talked all in praise of liberty, and so I made this epigram upon her. She was the loveliest creature I ever saw ! ”

*Liber ne esse velim, suasisti, pulchra Maria ;
Ut maneam liber, pulchra Maria, vale ! ”*

“ Will it do this way in English, sir ? ” said Mrs. Thrale :

“ Persuasions to freedom fall oddly from you ;
If freedom we seek, fair Maria, adieu ! ”¹

The translations from Boëthius at the end of the Letters were the joint work of Johnson and herself.

On another occasion, when Boswell was wishing for shorthand to take down the words of the Colossus of Literature, who was singularly eloquent at that moment, she told him he would remember them : “ A long head is better than shorthand.” Again, a clergyman in Bath informed his mother that he had lost his heart to a pretty Miss Prideaux, and must marry her or die. As he

¹ Hill’s “ Johnsonian Miscellanies,” i. 255.

had only known her a fortnight, she said he ought to see more of her. “More of her! Why, I have seen down to the fifth rib on each side already.” Mrs. Thrale bids her friend acknowledge that British belles not only exceed those of other nations, but also outstrip them.

Miss Seward describes her conversation as “that bright wine of the intellect which has no lees. Dr. Johnson told me truth when he said she has more wit than most of our literary women.” She was one of the leading lights among the Blue-stockings, so-called from the stockings of a Mr. Stillingfleet, who was invariably present at their meetings, but never wore the black stockings of evening-dress; and she received no small additional lustre among them by having in her keeping such a lion as Dr. Johnson. Madame d Arblay tells us¹ that—

Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Thrale had long been set up as rival candidates for colloquial eminence, and each of them thought the other alone worthy to be her peer. Openly, therefore, when they met, they combated for precedence of admiration, with placid though high-strained intellectual exertion on the one side, and an exuberant pleasantry or classical allusion or quotation on the other; without the smallest malice in either.

If one can judge of their talk by their letters, no one would hesitate for a moment to give the

¹ “Memoirs of Dr. Burney,” ii. 275.

palm to Mrs. Thrale : and one cannot help wishing that more of these had been preserved.

The often-quoted verses, generally supposed to be by Mr. (afterwards Sir W.) Pepys, in the *Morning Herald* for March 12, 1782, which give short characters of the leading Blue-stocking ladies, speak of—

Thrale, in whose expressive eyes
Sits a soul above disguise,
Skill'd with wit and sense t' impart
Feelings of a generous heart.

Johnson could not possibly have lived in intimacy with a woman who did not possess a really considerable amount of learning, and had had a more or less regular education. Without this, no woman could have understood him and added something to the conversation, as he expected his lady friends to do. He even at one time began to give Hetty Thrale and Fanny Burney Latin lessons, but Dr. Burney considered grammar too masculine a study for a Miss, and did not allow his daughter to continue. Upon this Baretti observes: “Johnson had a great notion that *knowing Latin would make women better*; but as far as my observation has gone, Latin spoils nine women out of ten, by making them pedantical and ostentatious.”¹ “Mr. Thrale,” says Boswell, “was tall, well-proportioned,

¹ On Thrale-Johnson Letters, ii. 173.

and stately. As for *Madam*, or *My Mistress*, by which epithet Johnson used to mention Mrs. Thrale, she was short, plump, and brisk." This is hardly a polite description to print of a lady at whose house he had frequently dined, even though she was a rival biographer of the great Doctor, and had married an opera-singer. She was pleasing in appearance, though not pretty. "No," she told the author of "*Piozziana*" many years later,¹ "I never was handsome. I had always too many strong points in my face for beauty." He describes her as "short, though well-proportioned, broad and deep-chested. Her hands were muscular and almost coarse, but her writing was, even in her eightieth year, exquisitely beautiful." She told him, "I believe I owe what you are pleased to call my good writing to the shape of this hand, for my uncle, Sir Robert Cotton, thought it was too manly to be employed in writing like a boarding-school girl; and so I came by my vigorous, black manuscript."² At the age of fourteen she had sat for the lady in Hogarth's "*The Lady's Last Stake*."

Madame d'Arblay describes her as—

a pretty woman still, though she has some defect in the mouth that looks like a cut or scar; but her nose is very handsome, her complexion very fair; she has the *embonpoint charmant*, and her eyes are

¹ p. 10.

² p. 8.

blue and lustrous. She is extremely lively and chatty.

She did not give the impression of the learned woman in the least, though her entrance into a room was florid and flourishing, seeming to say, “It is I!—no less a person than Mrs. Thrale!”¹ The scar was due to her horse having trodden on her in her youth, when she was thrown while riding in Hyde Park.² She insisted on its being reproduced in a miniature painted of her when she was seventy-seven.

Johnson had a real affection for her and thoroughly appreciated all her kindness to him, especially during his many illnesses, while her liveliness kept off his melancholy; and Murphy tells us that “in that society he began to wear off the rugged points of his character.” Johnson once made the astounding statement to her that he was “well-bred to a degree of needless scrupulosity,” which may be compared with his remark to Boswell that he thought himself a very polite man. Johnson was very susceptible. He once frankly said to Garrick, “I’ll come no more behind your scenes, Davy; for the silk stockings and white bosoms of your actresses excite my amorous propensities”; and when in the Highlands he even aired his views as to how his harem should be dressed. His habit of muttering

¹ “Memoirs of Dr. Burney,” ii. 87.

² “Piozziana,” p. 8.

to himself is often mentioned, and Boswell tells us that Tom Davies, who had a very pretty wife, on hearing him murmur, "Lead us not into temptation," whispered to her, "My dear, you are the cause of this." "On the praises of Mrs. Thrale," says Miss Reynolds, "he used to dwell with a peculiar delight, a paternal fondness, expressive of conscious exultation at being so intimate with her." He would not allow Boswell to treat her disrespectfully, and refused to drink her health in whisky in the Highlands. Miss Seward, however, says that "his last and long-enduring passion for Mrs. Thrale was composed of cupboard love, Platonic love, and vanity tickled and gratified from morn to night by incessant homage"; and this was Mrs. Thrale's own view, for she had no illusions as to his selfishness.

He certainly never spared her in the least when he felt she was in need of the correction of her illustrious friend. She was a bright, enthusiastic, lively woman, incapable of being strictly accurate in her statements or even of seeing the necessity of trying to be so—an unfortunate defect which makes it impossible for us to believe what she tells us, especially when she is an interested party. Johnson himself was strictly truthful, and could endure nothing so little as this lying, as he called it. "Johnson could scarcely sit an hour with her," says Baretti, "without abusing her for

her failing in talking nonsense, or telling lies, which she did every day of her life.”¹

But the pleasure that Johnson’s presence under their roof gave both husband and wife far outbalanced, in their eyes, any of his peculiarities. They both had the instinct of the true lion-hunter, nor did Mrs. Thrale exclude attractive lionesses from her house ; and the satisfaction of adding a good specimen to the collection is never lessened to any extent for the real enthusiasts by the growls and even the bites with which they may have to pay for that satisfaction. They succeeded in attracting to Streatham a succession of guests such as it has been given to few people to boast of having entertained : Reynolds and Garrick, Burke and Goldsmith, Dr. Burney, Arthur Murphy, Boswell, to say nothing of a large selection of distinguished professional men, lawyers, clergy, etc.—the learned, the witty, and the eminent in every way, in fact ; and every man of ability of the time was sure of a hearty welcome, so that an invitation to their house became a mark of distinction. Mr. Thrale loved to have the house full, and enjoyed entertaining these guests. Seward, author of the “*Anecdotes of Eminent Persons*,” was often Mrs. Thrale’s right-hand man on these occasions. He was a melancholy person, who could not endure his own company, of which the

¹ On Thrale-Johnson Letters, i. 232.

Streatham household gladly relieved him, as he could be amusing in society. Campbell notes that the cabmen knew Mr. Thrale's house without being told. Johnson generally spent the middle of the week there, returning home from Friday to Monday, in order to ensure his household having three good dinners with their lord and master.

Cards were rigidly excluded on principle, as spoiling conversation, and consequently the *ton*, except a few of the most intelligent members, were not attracted.

There never was any card-playing at Thrale's [says Baretti¹], but in the last year of his life, when he went to live in Grosvenor Square. She never could learn to play whist, or any other game, but a little of backgammon; but now that she lived in town, she thought of being fashionable, and having cards.

Woman-like, Mrs. Thrale would probably have gladly entertained the great world, for she had a wonderful social gift; but in later years she made ample amends, and saw all she could have wished of the highest society. Thrale, however, wanted to be amused by brilliant talk, and cared nothing for the *ton*, of which he had had his fill in his youth.

Of the ladies, there were all the Blues, of course; and Mrs. Thrale eagerly sought out new and

¹ On Thrale-Johnson Letters, i. 101.

promising additions, for it was not easy to find ladies capable of playing their part in such company. She pounced upon Fanny Burney as a treasure when “*Evelina*” came out, and would hardly let her out of her sight; while Sophia Streatfield—“the fair S.S.,” as they called her—who had succeeded Mrs. Thrale herself as Dr. Collier’s pet pupil, with her learning and her “ivory neck, nose, and notions à la Grecque,” and her power of crying at a moment’s notice, to the great enhancement of her great beauty, was steadily encouraged, in spite of Mr. Thrale’s shameless flirtations with her. These resulted in Mrs. Thrale leaving the table at the beginning of a big dinner on one occasion, and afterwards giving Johnson and Burke a severe “jobation” in the drawing-room for not standing up for her.

If we can believe Mrs. Thrale,¹ “the fair S.S.” was really an astounding flirt, including men of all classes, even bishops, among her victims. Dr. Burney even succumbed, to the great wrath of his daughter; but she was “everybody’s admiration and nobody’s choice,” and apparently died Sophia Streatfield. By this time Mrs. Thrale had grown quite indifferent to her husband’s affection, so long as appearances were kept up. She discusses the situation with great calmness in her diary, saying her husband “must not be a *man*, but an

¹ Hayward’s Piozzi, i. 110 ff.

it, to resist such artillery,” especially considering his state of health, and admits that her rival has “ten times my beauty and five times my scholarship; wit and knowledge has she none.” In fact, the presence of the “S.S.” was the most effective of medicines in rousing Mr. Thrale towards the end of his life. His wife was always allowed to be one of the most good-natured of women. She had the highest opinion of Miss Streatfield’s virtue, and apparently listened to her confidences about all her conquests, Mr. Thrale included, with real interest.

The wealthy brewer wished to possess a permanent memorial of his friends, and therefore decided to have the portraits of the principal ones among them painted by Reynolds. Fanny Burney has left us an account of the pictures.¹

Mrs. Thrale and her eldest daughter were in one piece, over the fire-place [of the library—the room where the family loved to make Johnson talk Ramblers] at full length. The rest of the portraits were all three-quarters. Mr. Thrale was over the door leading to his study. The general collection then began by Lord Sandys and Lord Westcote (Lyttelton), two early noble friends of Mr. Thrale. Then followed Dr. Johnson, Mr. Burke, Dr. Goldsmith, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Garrick, Mr. Baretti, Sir Robert Chambers, and Sir Joshua Reynolds himself—all presented in the highest style of this

¹ “Memoirs of Dr. Burney,” ii. 80.

great master, who much delighted in this his Streatham gallery. There was place left but for one more frame when the acquaintance with Dr. Burney began,

and his was the last portrait added.

That Baretti was included in such a gallery shows the high favour in which he was once held by the Thrales. He sat for his portrait in 1774. Malone says it is an admirable likeness. In 1816, at the Streatham sale, it was bought by "Stewart, Esq., I know not who," for £31 10s., the lowest price given, Dr. Johnson's fetching £378, the highest. In 1780 Reynolds raised his price for three-quarter lengths from thirty-five guineas to fifty, which, Mrs. Thrale complained, made the portraits in several cases cost more than they fetched, as she was obliged to pay for them at the higher price at Mr. Thrale's death. Baretti's portrait afterwards passed into Mr. Watson Taylor's hands, and at his sale was bought by Lord Hertford, who exchanged it with Lord Holland for a family portrait. It is now in Holland House, Kensington.¹

Conversation was the chief amusement at the Thrales'. Poor Dr. Burney found it hopeless to try to teach his pupil, Hetty Thrale, music.

Mrs. Thrale, who had no passion but for conversation, in which her eminence was justly her

¹ For this information I am indebted to the Earl of Ilchester, the present owner of the portrait.

pride, continually broke into the lesson to discuss the news of the times. . . . But she intermingled what she related, or what she heard, with sallies so gay, so unexpected, so classically erudite, or so variously entertaining, that the tutor and the pupil were alike drawn away from their studies.¹

Mrs. Thrale had no ear for music, and did not know a flat from a sharp. She was, however, a good judge of a picture, as even Baretti admits.

We owe most of what we know of the Streatham talk to Fanny Burney. She did not come upon the scenes till two years after Baretti had left, but it could hardly have changed much in the interval. This is her description of her first visit:²

LONDON, *August 1778.*

Our journey to Streatham was the least pleasant part of the day, for the roads were dreadfully dusty, and I was really in the fidgets from thinking what my reception might be, and from fearing they would expect a less awkward and backward kind of person than I was sure they would find.

Mrs. Thrale's house is white, very pleasantly situated in a fine paddock. Mrs. Thrale was strolling about, and came to us as we got out of the chaise.

She then received me, taking both my hands, and with mixed politeness and cordiality welcoming me to Streatham. She led me into the house, and addressed herself almost wholly for a few minutes

¹ "Memoirs of Dr. Burney," ii. 76.

² D'Arblay, *Diary*, i. 53.

to my father, as if to give me an assurance she did not mean to regard me as a show, or to distress or frighten me by drawing me out. Afterwards she took me upstairs, and showed me the house, and said she had very much wished to see me at Streatham, and should always think herself much obliged to Dr. Burney for his goodness in bringing me, which she looked upon as a very great favour.

But though we were some time together, and though she was so very civil, she did not hint at my book, and I love her much more than ever for her delicacy in avoiding a subject which she could not but see would have greatly embarrassed me.

When we returned to the music-room, we found Miss Thrale was with my father. Miss Thrale is a very fine girl, about fourteen years of age, but cold and reserved, though full of knowledge and intelligence.

Soon after Mrs. Thrale took me to the library ; she talked a little while upon common topics, and then, at last, she mentioned “*Evelina*.”

I now prevailed upon Mrs. Thrale to let me amuse myself, and she went to dress. I then prowled about to choose some book, and I saw upon the reading-table, “*Evelina*.” I had just fixed upon a new translation of Cicero’s “*Laelius*” when the library door was opened, and Mr. Seward entered. I instantly put away my book, because I dreaded being thought studious and affected. He offered his service to find anything for me, and then, in the same breath, ran on to speak of the book with which I had myself favoured the world!...

How different from the delicacy of Mr. and Mrs. Thrale !

She met Dr. Johnson at dinner, and gives the following specimen of his way of treating Mrs. Thrale in a discussion afterwards :¹

Langton's children might be very good children if they were let alone ; but the father is never easy when he is not making them do something which they cannot do ; they must repeat a fable, or a speech, or the Hebrew alphabet ; and they might as well count twenty, for what they know of the matter ; however, the father says half, for he prompts every other word. But he could not have chosen a man who would have been less entertained by such means ! “ I believe not ! ” cried Mrs. Thrale ; “ nothing is more ridiculous than parents cramming their children's nonsense down other people's throats. I keep mine as much out of the way as I can.” “ Yours, madam,” answered he, “ are in nobody's way ; but your fault is, a too great perverseness in not allowing anybody to give them anything. Why should they not have a cherry, or a gooseberry, as well as bigger children ? ”

“ Because they are sure to return such gifts by wiping their hands upon the giver's gown or coat, and nothing makes children more offensive. People only make the offer to please the parents, and they wish the poor children at Jericho when they accept it.” “ But madam, it is a great deal more offensive to refuse them. Let those who make the offer look to their own gowns and coats, for when you interfere they only wish *you* at Jericho.”

Indeed, the freedom with which Dr. Johnson condemns whatever he disapproves, is astonishing ;

¹ D'Arblay, Diary, i. 66.

and the strength of words he uses would, to most people, be intolerable ; but Mrs. Thrale seems to have a sweetness of disposition that equals all her other excellences, and far from making a point of vindicating herself, she generally receives his admonitions with the most respectful silence.

Johnson did not introduce Boswell till 1769, but he also has recorded his first impressions :

On the 6th of October I complied with this obliging invitation ; and found, at an elegant villa, six miles from town, every circumstance that can make society pleasing. Johnson, though quite at home, was yet looked up to with an awe, tempered by affection, and seemed to be equally the care of his host and his hostess. I rejoiced at seeing him so happy. . . .

Mrs. Thrale disputed with him on the merit of Prior. He attacked him powerfully ; said he wrote of love like a man who had never felt it ; his love verses were college verses : he repeated the song, “*Alexis shunn’d his fellow swains,*” etc., in so ludicrous a manner as to make us all wonder how any one could have been pleased with such fantastical stuff. Mrs. Thrale stood to her guns with great courage, in defence of amorous ditties, which Johnson despised, till he at last silenced her by saying, “*My dear lady, talk no more of this. Nonsense can be defended but by nonsense.*”¹

No wonder Johnson attributed his not mixing in the highest circles to the Great not liking to

¹ Hill’s *Boswell*, ii. 77.

have their mouths stopped ; for his methods of silencing people, if effective, were hardly calculated to make him popular.

According to Baretti, Johnson's—

austere reprimands and unrestrained upbraidings, when face to face with her, always delighted Mr. Thrale, and were approved even by her children : and I remember to this purpose a piece of mortification she once underwent by a *trait de naïveté* of poor little Harry, some months before he died. “Harry,” said his father to him, on entering the room where madam sat with Johnson, “are you listening to what the Doctor and mamma are talking about ?” “Yes, papa,” answered the boy. “And,” quoth Mr. Thrale, “what are they saying ?” “They are disputing,” replied Harry ; “but mamma has just such a chance against Dr. Johnson, as Presto would have, if he were to fight Dash.” Dash was a large dog, and Presto but a little one.¹

From this it is clear that Mrs. Thrale had not altogether an enviable position. If Baretti is telling the truth—and in this case there is other evidence in a private letter to his brothers, to whom he had no object in lying, which we shall quote in its proper place—her husband would appear neither to have respected her himself nor to have expected others to do so. In after-years she does not seem to have looked back on these

¹ *Eur. Mag.*, xiii. 397.

Streatham days with much real pleasure. There is always a tone of bitterness in the memory, if we may judge from the quotations from the "Thraliana," etc., given us by Hayward. Doubtless Piozzi was a far more affectionate husband than Thrale; and then, as she herself says, during most of the time she was losing or having a child every year, for Thrale passionately longed for a son to carry on the name and the business. There was also a serious financial storm to be weathered, in which she loyally supported her husband and showed sound common sense and business ability of no mean order. She even seems, at times, to have regarded Johnson largely as an additional burden inflicted on her by her husband; but this is not true, as there is ample evidence to prove that she thoroughly enjoyed his society, though, after Thrale's death, she had no one at hand able to combat him. Indeed, in spite of the brilliant intellectual position she occupied, she experienced most of the trials of life as Mrs. Thrale and most of its pleasures as Mrs. Piozzi.

CHAPTER XII

BARETTI AND THE THRALES

1773—1776

As Baretti's reputation in England was now at its height, the Thrales were not unwilling to make him a regular member of their household, where he would be a real acquisition, while at the same time their daughter would have the advantage of working with the most prominent teacher of languages of the day.

At first the plan was a success, and Mrs. Thrale gives the following stories of Baretti at Streatham in the “Thraliana”¹:

Will. Burke was tart upon Mr. Baretti for being too dogmatical in his talk about politics. “You have,” says he, “no business to be investigating the characters of Lord Falkland and Hampden. You cannot judge of their merits; they are no countrymen of yours.”

“True,” replied Baretti, “and you should learn by the same rule to speak very cautiously about Brutus and Mark Antony; they are my country-

¹ Hayward's “Piozzi,” i. 93.

men, and I must have their characters tenderly treated by foreigners."

Baretti could not endure to be called, or scarcely thought, a foreigner, and indeed it did not often occur to his company that he was one; for his accent was wonderfully proper, and his language always copious, always nervous, always full of various allusions, flowing too with a rapidity worthy of admiration, and far beyond the power of nineteen in twenty natives. He had also a knowledge of the solemn language and the gay, could be sublime with Johnson, or blackguard with the groom; could dispute, could rally, could quibble in our language. Baretti has, besides, some skill in music, with a bass voice, very agreeable [from what we know of Mrs. Thrale's ear, Carlo Gozzi's opinion of his voice is more likely to be the true one], besides a falsetto, which he can manage so as to mimic any singer he hears. I would also trust his knowledge of painting a long way. These accomplishments, with his extensive power over every modern language, make him a most pleasing companion while he is in good humour; and his lofty consciousness of his own superiority, which made him tenacious of every position, and drew him into a thousand distresses, did not, I must own, ever disgust me, till he began to exercise it against myself, and resolve to reign in our house by fairly defying the mistress of it. Pride, however, though shocking enough, is never despicable, but vanity, which he possessed too, in an eminent degree, will sometimes make a man near sixty ridiculous.

I will give an instance of his skill in our low

street language. Walking in a field near Chelsea, he met a fellow, who, suspecting him from dress and manner to be a foreigner, said sneeringly, “Come, sir, will you show me the way to France ?” “No, sir,” says Baretti instantly ; “but I will show you the way to Tyburn.”

He was obviously a source of great amusement at Streatham, where his peculiarities were thoroughly enjoyed, even after his abrupt departure.

As I have always heard from my father [writes Fanny Burney,¹] that every individual at Streatham spends the morning alone, I took the first opportunity of absconding, and amused myself in writing till I tired. About noon, when I went into the library, book-hunting, Mrs. Thrale came to me.

We had a very nice confab about various books, and exchanged opinions and imitations of Baretti ; she told me many excellent tales of him, and I, in return, related my stories.

If only Fanny Burney could have forgotten “Evelina” and recorded some of these stories, instead of relating the exact way in which the nauseating question of the book was led up to by each fresh individual she met, how infinitely grateful we should have been ! However, “Evelina” was probably the chief subject of interest to Daddy Crisp and the people at Cheshington, so we must be thankful she has given us

¹ D'Arblay, Diary, i. 76.

as much as she has ; but one often sighs for the manner of the Early Diary once again.

Hetty Thrale instantly became another of Baretti's darlings, and was duly enshrined as the chief among the growing number of his goddesses. She seems to have been naturally cold and reserved, with a very strong will and a character that impressed all who came near her. She was obviously her father's daughter and an absolute contrast to her mother. In the family she was known as Queeney, owing to her name resembling that of Queen Esther ; but Baretti always called her his "Esteruccia." In 1773 she was quite a little girl of ten, so that his task cannot have been arduous, and his statement that he taught her from morning till night was a gross exaggeration. His affection for his pupil was well known. Johnson writes in 1775 : "Where is Baretti ? Are he and Queeney plague and darling as they used to be ?" And we find Mrs. Thrale writing¹ : "Queeney revenges her long task upon Mr. Baretti's hen, who must sit on duck-eggs a week longer than her own." Baretti spoke the truth when he wrote that "every one who knows me, knows I love children."

She must have been a remarkable girl. In 1777 Fanny Burney describes her as—
verging on her teens. She is certainly handsome,

¹ Thrale-Johnson Letters, i. 238.

and her beauty is of a peculiar sort ; fair, round, firm, and cherubinical ; with its chief charm exactly where lies the mother's failure—namely, in the mouth. She is reckoned cold and proud, but I believe her to be merely shy and reserved.¹

When the family were in Paris in 1775, Johnson wrote to Levett (October 22) :

We went to see the King and Queen at dinner, and the Queen was so impressed by Miss [Thrale] that she sent one of the gentlemen to inquire who she was.

She took up a very decided line in family matters, and supported her mother in her battles about “the fair S. S.” ; but she was equally resolute in opposing the Piozzi marriage, and refused to go with the couple on their honeymoon.

Mrs. Thrale left the girls in charge of a Miss Nicholson ; but Miss Thrale dismissed her, doubtless with good reasons. She sent her young sisters to school. Hayward² gives the following account of her, obviously obtained from some one who knew her well :

She could not take up her abode with either of her guardians—one a bachelor under forty, the other the prototype of Briggs, the old miser in “Cecilia.” She could not accept Johnson’s hospitality in Bolt Court, still tenanted by the survivors of his menagerie ; where, a few months later, she sat by his death-bed and received his blessing.

¹ “Memoirs of Dr. Burney,” ii. 88.

² Hayward’s Piozzi, i. 234.

She therefore called to her aid an old nursemaid, named Tib, who had been much trusted by her father; and with this homely but respectable duenna she shut herself up in the house at Brighton, limited her expenses to her allowance of £200 a year, and resolutely set about the course of study which seemed best adapted to absorb attention and prevent her thoughts from wandering. Hebrew, mathematics, fortification, and perspective have been named to me by one of her trusted friends as specimens of her acquirements and pursuits.

In that solitary abode at Brighton, and in the companionship of Tib, may have been laid the foundations of a character than which few, through the changeful scenes of a long and prosperous life, have exercised more beneficial influence or inspired more genuine esteem. On coming of age, and being put into possession of her fortune, she hired a house in London, and took her two eldest sisters to live with her. They had been at school while she was living at Brighton. On the return of Mr. and Mrs. Piozzi, she made a point of paying them every becoming attention, and Piozzi was constantly dining with her. Latterly, she used to speak of him as a very worthy sort of man, who was not to blame for marrying a rich and distinguished woman who took a fancy to him. The other sisters seem to have adopted the same tone.

All this trouble seems to have spoilt her youth. She took little pleasure in dancing and similar amusements, and Baretti notes that “now that she is three-and-twenty, though rich and independent,

she is already too gloomy herself.”¹ This may be the reason why she did not marry till 1808, when she became the wife of Admiral Viscount Keith.

With Mrs. Thrale Baretti can never have felt much in sympathy. She was not of the modest, retiring type of Englishwoman for whom he had such unbounded admiration, and he doubtless considered her to possess, in spite of her ability, many of the faults for which he blamed his own country-women.

Thrown so much with the children, he soon found that she was not a model mother. None of her girls in after-life seem to have felt any real affection for her. As we have seen, she kept them out of the way as much as possible, and sacrificed them to her own social pleasures. They always maintained that she had no heart; and though we cannot implicitly believe Baretti’s strictures in the *European Magazine*, this at least is clear from them, that, contrary to Johnson’s belief, the death of their only son, Harry, which completely broke up his father, had no more than a passing effect on her. One could hardly expect her to feel her husband’s death to any extent; but the fact that she abandoned her children on a journey from Bath to Brighton, in order to go off and marry Piozzi, shows how little she thought

¹ On Thrale-Johnson Letters, i. 256.

of them. Children have a marvellous quickness for discovering those who are really fond of them, which amounts almost to an instinct ; and no efforts on the part of a parent who has not troubled to gain their affection during their childhood, when they most require it, will ever gain more than a dutiful attention in return.

A true Italian, Baretti attached the highest importance to the duties of a parent, and nothing disgusted him more than to see them, as he thought, neglected, especially by a mother.

The girls were never so happy as when their mother was away [he writes¹], who did nothing but scold or beat them for the most trivial faults or omissions. As to me, when I had done teaching Queeney, I made them run merrily about, and nobody checked their mirth but their mother.

This is, of course, an exaggeration, written in a moment of extreme irritation ; but it contains no little truth. All through the quotations from her Diaries, etc., we can feel that Mrs. Thrale is conscious that she has not won her children's affection, and is angry with them in consequence, though thoroughly aware of her own failure. She certainly never had their confidence.

She seems to have had some strange notions about children, and Baretti's methods of setting

¹ On Thrale-Johnson Letters, i. 277.

them right were perhaps not the most tactful. She held that they were attracted by the appearances of things, and would as readily eat an onion as an apple when offered them. Baretti denied this, and Sophy, one of the youngest, was fetched. Her mother cut a piece of onion, put it in her mouth, and told her to eat it, which she did.

“ See, see,” said madam, with a triumphant emphasis, “ are you clear now that children have no taste ? ” “ Sophy,” said I, “ mama gives you the choice of the onion and the apple, and you may eat which you chuse.” “ To be sure, I chuse the apple,” said Sophy. “ But why,” said I, “ when the apple is but small, and the onion three times as large ? ” “ Very true,” said Sophy ; “ but the onion is very bad, and the apple is very good.” Here the mother’s exultation began to lower, and her forehead began to overspread with a cloud. “ But why,” said I, “ did you eat the slice of onion that mama put into your mouth ? ” “ Because,” answered she, “ when mama bids me do a thing, I must do it, and quick, or she gives me a good box on the ears.”

Baretti then refers to the weight of the “ Salisbury fist,” of which she was proud, and says it would not disgrace a Humphreys or a Mendoza. “ The tyrant over them, and they knew it, was not Baretti, but their mother herself, who brought them up with such severity of discipline, as not

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to suffer them even to speak in her presence, but when absolutely commanded."¹ We need not infer from this that Mrs. Thrale was much more strict than the average mother, as in those days stern discipline was the rule.

Mrs. Thrale always respected Baretti. In her character-verses on the portraits in the library, this is how she describes him :

Baretti hangs next—by his frowns you may know him ;
He has lately been reading some new-publish'd poem :
He finds the poor author a blockhead, a beast,
A fool without sentiment, judgment or taste.
Ever thus let our critic his insolence fling,
Like the hornet in Homer, impatient to sting.
Let him rally his friends for their frailties before 'em,
And scorn the dull praise of that blind thing, decorum,
While tenderness, temper, and truth he despises,
And only the triumph of victory prizes.
Yet let us be candid, and where shall we find
So active, so able, so ardent a mind ?
To your children more soft, more polite with your servant,
More firm in distress, or in friendship more fervent ?
Thus Aetna enraged her artillery pours,
And tumbles down palaces, princes, and towers ;
While the fortunate peasantry fix'd at its foot,
Can make it a hot-house to ripen their fruit.²

Elsewhere she writes ³ :

His character is easily seen, and his soul above
disguise, haughty, and insolent, and breathing
defiance against all mankind ; while his powers
of mind exceed most people's, and his powers of

¹ *Eur. Mag.*, xiii. 395.

² Hayward's *Piozzi*, ii. 177.

³ *Ibid.*, i. 103.

purse are so slight that they leave him dependent on all. Baretti is for ever in the state of a stream damm'd up ; if he could once get loose, he would bear down all before him.

Baretti continued to visit his old friends. In 1772 Fanny Burney writes :

I have had the honour, also, of seeing Mr. Baretti, author of "The Journey to Spain," and many other books. He is a very good-looking man, which is all I can say, as I have not exchanged more than half a dozen words with him.¹

In the following year she says she has likewise had the honour of two short conversations with Mr. Baretti.

Mr. Baretti appears to be very *facetious* ; he amused himself very much with Charlotte, whom he calls *Churlotte*, and kisses her whether she will or no, always calmly saying, "Kiss-à-me, Churlotte." He asked her if she had read "Robinson Crusoe"? Charlotte coloured, and said, "Yes, sir." "And pray, how many years *vas* he on *de* uninhabited island?" "Oh, sir, I can't tell that!" "Vat! Don't you remember *vat* you read? Den, my pretty Churlotte, you might spare your eye-sight. But can you remember *vat* was *de* name of Robinson Crusoe's island?" "Oh, sir, no, that I can't, indeed!" "And could you read all *dat* book, and not find out *dat* it has no name at all?"

¹ "Early Diary," i. 169.

Baretti's foreign accent is almost certainly exaggerated here, for all other witnesses agree that he spoke English nearly perfectly.

Charlotte Burney is afterwards often referred to as "Chūrlotte" in the family papers, or "Mrs. Baretti." She was invariably the pet of the Burneys' many friends. Garrick called her his own "Reynolds' Comedy," declaring that she was the image of Comedy in the famous picture where he is represented as being pulled in opposite directions by Tragedy and Comedy; and his "Piety in Pattens." Her liveliness lasted long, as well as her looks, and her sister Hetty rallies her on being the toast at Bath when she had been twice widowed and was a grandmother. Fanny was shy and reserved, except among her intimates, but watched everything. In the family she was called The Old Lady.¹

The Doctor's two literary Italian friends [she tells us²], Martinelli and Baretti, were occasional visitors; and by the rapidity of their elocution, the exuberance of their gestures, and the distortion of their features, upon even the most trivial contradiction, always gave to the Doctor a distinctly national reminiscence of the Italian or Volcanic portion of his tours.

The Doctor knew Italian moderately well, having found time to study it on his admirably

¹ F. Burney, "Early Diary," i. 197-8.

² "Memoirs of Dr. Burney," i. 294.

trained horse while riding long distances to give music lessons in his early days in Norfolk.

As to Baretti's English, Mr. Twiss said he thought he never knew a foreigner who spoke English so well as Baretti; "but so very slow (in a drawling voice, turning to me) that if he—were—to—make—love—it—would—take—him—*tree*—hours—to utter a declaration."¹

In 1773 Baretti had a furious quarrel with Tom Davies—irreconcilable, Johnson thought—probably in connection with the edition of "Don Quixote," for which he was advancing Baretti £10 a month. Three years later Mrs. Thrale says Davies spoke with horror of Baretti's ferocious temper. "And yet," says I, "there is a great sensibility about Baretti. I have seen tears often stand in his eyes." "Indeed," replies Davies, "I should like to have seen that sight vastly, when even butchers weep."²

Several incidents show the high opinion held of Baretti in London at this time. Horace Walpole writes to Mason (July 29, 1773), who had consulted him about publishing a letter of Gray's in Italian, that he does not know a soul in town at present that is acquainted with Baretti: from which it is clear that he was looked upon as the chief living authority on Italian then in the country.

¹ F. Burney, "Early Diary," i. 287.

² Hayward's Piozzi, i. 108.

One of Hannah More's sisters wrote home in 1774 :

Since I wrote last Hannah has been introduced by Miss Reynolds to Baretti, to Edmund Burke (the sublime and beautiful Edmund Burke!): from a large party of literary persons, assembled at Sir Joshua's, she received the most encouraging compliments; and the spirit in which she returned them was acknowledged by all present, as Miss Reynolds informed poor us.¹

Johnson's famous reply to her lavish praises reminds us that she was a past-master in the art of returning compliments. The coupling of Baretti's name with that of Burke shows that he was highly thought of as a man of letters, even by ladies from the country.

The following letters explain themselves² :—

TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN, November 1st, 1774.

MY DEAR SIR,—

I take the liberty of addressing myself to you, as the great patron of literary men, and the person who can best inform me of their circumstances. Possibly I might offend Mr. Baretti, were I to make my application directly to him. But you will judge whether he might be asked, with propriety, to accept a settlement in Dublin. Mr. Hutchinson, now at the head of our University, has formed a scheme of fostering the rigour of our studies and manners, by adding a

¹ Hannah More's Memoirs, i. 48.

² *Gent. Mag.*, vol. lx. p. 1063.

school of modern languages to our establishment. The sum of £200 a year is to be allocated to this purpose ; of which £100 is to be assigned to the Professor, the other to be divided among his assistants. We wish that the Professor should undertake to teach Italian, or any other modern language he may chuse. Should Mr. Baretti consent to fill this station, besides his certain annual appointment, we shall contrive to lodge him like a gentleman in College. He will be well received, find many friends ; and by teaching Italian abroad will certainly get a good deal of money. Before I ventured to write to you, I consulted Lord Charlemont, who encouraged me by all means to convey the prospect to Mr. Baretti through you, and thinks his residence here might be made very agreeable. Should he at all think of it, I shall flatter myself with the hopes of hearing from him or you, and shall endeavour to give him full information in every particular, that he may determine in a manner becoming his good sense.

THO. LELAND.

P.S.—I fancy I need not say that this proposal to Mr. Baretti is made with the concurrence and approbation of our Provost.

REVEREND SIR,—

I have now maturely considered of the proposal you were so good as to make me in your most obliging letter to — ; nor is it without pain that I resolve to decline so honourable an offer. Such a country as England cannot be quitted by a feeling man without the greatest

reluctance, especially when long residence, and most pleasing attachments, have rendered it no less agreeable than familiar. Were I thirty years younger, and of course looking forward to a prospect gradually improving, a certain emolument, though ever so small, might prove a temptation ; but even then my heart would resist the mean expedient of beating up for casual scholars, when I considered myself concerned with so respectable an University as yours. Giving therefore my warmest thanks both to you and Mr. Hutchinson for your generous kindness, and begging my most respectful compliments to my Lord Charlemont, I am with greatest gratitude, Reverend Sir, your most humble and most obedient servant,

J. BARETTI.

REVEREND DR. LELAND.

In 1775 he published some Italian dialogues, “Easy Phraseology for the Use of Young Ladies who intend to learn the Colloquial Part of the Italian Language,” all written for Hetty Thrale, and all between him and her, “except now and then a shovel and a poker, or a goose and a chair happen to step in,” says Fanny Burney,¹ who made Johnson acknowledge his authorship of the Preface. Baretti’s method of varying the dialogues is really extraordinary. We have one between Baretti and two elephants, and there are others between a pair of coach-horses, or Hetty

¹ D’Arblay, Diary, ii. 263.

and her needle. The last in the book is between three dialogues and a Japanese box in the old Streatham school-room, and it is they who sing the pretty verses to their young mistress which end the volume :

Viva ! viva la padrona !
 Tutta bella, e tutta buona ;
 La padrona è un' angioletta
 Tutta buona e tutta bella ;
 Tutta bella e tutta buona,
 Viva ! viva la padrona !

Mrs. Thrale took Johnson's extempore version of these lines as a compliment to herself, as it was doubtless intended ; but Baretti wrote the verses for his Esteruccia. One can feel the heaviness of the Doctor's touch in contrast with the lightness of the Italian.

Long may you live, my lovely Hetty !
 Always young and always pretty,
 Always pretty, always young,
 Live my lovely Hetty long !
 Always young and always pretty,
 Long may you live, my lovely Hetty !

The dialogues were popular in their way, and Fanny Burney used to read them in odd moments when off duty at court. Johnson joined Boswell in censuring them, however, saying nothing odd would last, and adding that "Tristram Shandy" did not last, which rather weakens the value of the criticism.¹

¹ Hill's Boswell, ii. 449.

In this year Dr. Campbell, an Irish clergyman, visited England, and wrote the diary which was so strangely discovered in Sydney some half a century ago. He took a great fancy to Baretti, describing him as a—

plain, sensible man, who seems to know the world well. He talked to me of the invitation given him by the College of Dublin, but said it . . . was not worth his acceptance ; and if it had been, he said, from point of profit, still he would not have accepted it, for that now he could not live out of London. . . . He told me he had several families, with whom, both in town and country, he could go any time and spend a month : he is at this time on these terms at Mr. Thrale's, and he knows how to keep his ground. Talking as we were at tea of the magnitude of the beer-vessels, he said there was one thing in Mr. Thrale's house still more extraordinary ; meaning his wife. She gulped the pill very prettily—so much for Baretti !¹

He describes her as a “very learned lady, and joins to the charms of her own sex, the manly understanding of ours.”² In one place he calls Baretti “a sort of literary toad-eater to Johnson.” On March 25 he sat next Baretti at the Thrales’—

which was to me the richest part of the entertainment. Baretti was very humorous about his new publication, which he expects to put out

¹ Campbell's Diary, March 16, 1775.

² *Ibid.*, p. 50.

next month. He there introduces a dialogue about Ossian, wherein he ridicules the idea of the double translation into Italian, in hopes, he said, of having it abused by the Scots, which would give it an imprimatur for a second edition, and he had stipulated for twenty-five guineas additional if the first should sell in a given time.

He includes Baretti among the lions he had come to London to see in talking to Robinson, Archbishop of Armagh, the Primate of Ireland. Having been informed of the dislike of Baretti and Boswell for each other, he observes that “upon Baretti’s entering Boswell did not rise, and upon Baretti’s discovery of Boswell, he grinned a perturbed glance.”¹

Baretti complains that Mayor Vallancy had treated him ill in his discourse on the antiquity of the Irish language, by saying that he had misrepresented the copy he gave of a Biscayan *Pater-noster*, for, says he, I quote one, he quotes another, and a fifth might be quoted, all different from each other; now, says he, I could not misrepresent, for I could not understand, and the fact is, I did not misrepresent, for I can produce the book from which I quoted.²

The famous trip to France with Johnson and

¹ Campbell’s Dairy, 52.

² *Ibid.*, p. 48. Cp. “An Essay on the Antiquity of the Irish Language [L.C.V.] to which is added . . . a correction of the mistakes committed by Mr. Baretti in his collation of the Irish with the Biscayan language . . . exposed and corrected” (*i.e.* in the “Journey”). Dublin, 1772.

the Thrales, when Baretti conducted the party, took place in 1775. He was invaluable.

France [says Mr. Thrale¹] displayed all Mr. Baretti's useful powers—he bustled for us, he catered for us, he took care of the child, he secured an apartment for the maid, he provided for our safety, our amusement, our repose; without him the pleasure of the journey would never have balanced the pain. And great was his disgust, to be sure, when he caught us, as he often did, ridiculing French manners, French sentiments, etc. I think he half cryed to Mrs. Payne, the landlady at Dover, on our return, because we laughed at French cookery, and French accommodations. Oh, how he would court the maids at the inns abroad, abuse the men, perhaps! and that with a facility not to be exceeded, as they all confessed, by any of the natives. But so he could in Spain, I find, and so 'tis plain he could here.

On Mr. Thrale remarking of the beds in France, “No, no, dirty enough, to be sure, but exceeding soft,” Baretti comments: “This is such English stuff as Englishmen delight to tell for hours and hours. But the fact is that Mr. Thrale had clean and soft beds in France, as well as all other rich folk, and the poor have them hard and unclean in England as everywhere else.”²

Johnson summed up France as “worse than Scotland in everything but climate. Nature has

¹ Hayward, i. 95.

² On Thrale-Johnson Letters, i. 374.

done more for the French, but they have done less for themselves than the Scotch have done"; and he wrote to Levett:

Mr. Thrale is very liberal, and keeps us two coaches and a very fine table; but I think our cookery very bad. . . . I ran a race in the rain this day and beat Baretti. Baretti is a very fine fellow, and speaks French, I think, quite as well as English.

The race would indeed have been worth seeing. Perhaps Johnson's victory did something to increase his enthusiasm for Baretti.

Baretti regarded Johnson as—

not fit to travel, as every place was equal to him. He mused as much on the road to Paris as he did in his garret in London. . . . With men, women, and children he never cared to exchange a word, and if he ever took any delight in anything, it was to converse with some old acquaintances.¹

For scenery he cared nothing. He once said that he would rather go a hundred miles to speak with one wise man than five miles to see a fair town. He must often have been a trying companion.

When we were at Rouen together, he took a great fancy to the Abbé Roffette, with whom he conversed about the destruction of the Order of the Jesuits, and condemned it loudly, as a blow to the general power of the Church, and likely

¹ On Thrale-Johnson Letters, i. 315.

to be followed by many and dangerous innovations, which might at length become fatal to religion itself, and shake even the foundations of Christianity. The gentleman seemed to wonder and delight in his conversation : the talk was all in Latin, which both spoke fluently, and Mr. Johnson pronounced a long eulogium upon Milton with so much ardour, eloquence, and ingenuity, that the abbé rose from his seat and embraced him. My husband, seeing them apparently so charmed with the company of each other, politely invited the abbé to England, intending to oblige his friend, who, instead of thanking, reprimanded him severely before the man, for such a sudden burst of tenderness towards a person he could know nothing at all of ; and thus put a sudden finish to all his own and Mr. Thrale's entertainment from the company of the Abbé Roffette.¹

Miss Reynolds believed that “ there never existed any cordial friendship between Dr. Johnson and Baretti after their journey to Paris.” Baretti was doubtless pretentious, and he gave her the following reason for their coolness :

A lady observed that Dr. Johnson had said that Madam [*sic*] du Bocage was a poor creature. “ Yes ” [said Baretti], “ because he hated her before he saw her. . . . [She was told by a friend of the Thrales, Mrs. Strickland, that] ‘ le grand Johnson, l’homme le plus savant de toute l’Angleterre,’ was come to Paris, and Mr. Barretti [*sic*]. ‘ Oh, Barretti, Barretti that I have heard so much of, and that

¹ Hayward’s Piozzi, i. 90.

I have wished so much to see ; bring me, bring me Baretti, je vous en prie.' Mrs. Strickland, 'Et le grand Johnson aussi ?' Madam D——e, 'Je ne me soucie de qui que ce soit d'autre, pourvu que vous m'amenez Barretti. Je lis actuellement son livre, son voyage d'Espagne, et je suis variment [sic] impatiente d'en connaître l'Auteur. Mais je vous prie de faire mes compliments à tous, et à Madame Thrale en particulier. Je serais très aise de voir toute cette bonne compagnie.'

"Mrs. Strickland on her return [continued Baretti] said something of Madame D——'s impatience to see me in Johnson's hearing ; and finding her quite indifferent about him, he took such an antipathy to her, that he went with reluctance to visit her, and never could be persuaded upon to go a second time."

She was the lady who blew down the spout of the teapot and put the sugar in the cups with her fingers, remarking to Mrs. Thrale, who hesitated about using such primitive methods, "Oh, mon Dieu, quel grand quanquan les Anglais font de peu de chose !" ¹

They left England on September 15 and returned in the middle of November. Baretti, who kept the purse, informed his brothers that the trip had cost Mr. Thrale eight hundred and twenty-two louis d'or.²

So pleased was Mr. Thrale with the French

¹ Hill's "Johnsonian Miscellanies," ii. 290. ² February 2, 1776.

tour that he decided in the following year to go with the same party to Italy, Baretti again acting as convoy. We have several letters of his to friends in Italy making arrangements for the lodging of the party and inquiring for the best hotels ; but most interesting of all are the letters to his brothers about his visit. At first they did not relish the idea at all.

A very rich gentleman [he writes (February 2, 1776)] has asked me to go with him on a long journey and not to desert one of his daughters, whose education was entrusted to my care about three years ago. Who could ever have imagined that, instead of being pleased at this news, which perhaps means daily bread for me for the rest of my days, you would all three be most indignant at it, as if I were going with him not as a companion, but as a hired servant in livery ? How could you possibly imagine that I should be so foolish as to allow myself to appear in my own country, or in any other place, in a position unsuitable for one who has gained some reputation in the world as a man of letters ? How is it degrading for a man of letters to permit himself to be chosen as a travelling companion by a man of wealth ? Has not this been the custom in the world since the days of Mæcenas, who took Horace with him on his travels ? Johnson, who is looked upon as the most learned man in England and has a pension of £300 a year from his king, so far from being ashamed, regards it as an honour to accompany Mr. Thrale in the very same way ;

and am I to be so absurd as to regard as a disgrace what Johnson regards as an honour ? You poor Piedmontese have not yet learnt that literature makes a man of letters the equal of a rich man, and gives him rank as his companion, not as his servant. That I shall be Mr. Thrale's companion, not his servant—nay, his intimate and most familiar friend, you will see with your own eyes when we appear.

The next is dated March 22 :

MY DEAREST BROTHERS,—

I am answering Amedeo's of February 24 and Filippo's postscript of the 28th. We start on April 8 in three four-wheeled chaises, such as are used here ; and, as I think I have already said, we shall be a party of five, not counting the servants ; Mr. Thrale, his wife, their daughter, Johnson and myself ; and we shall occupy two of the chaises in turn. In the other there will be a maid and a groom, while another groom will follow on horseback. A German courier is to precede us, who can speak enough of the various languages to make himself understood. We shall provide ourselves with temporary servants in the various cities where we stay. Mr. Thrale, in spite of a tendency to economy, wishes to keep a good table in every way and to make the journey in comfort, his chief object being to see countries of different appearance and different ways of passing this miserable existence from his own.

The remark about economy explains why Thrale was always rich and Baretti always poor.

Baretti's powers as a traveller are admirably displayed in the next letter, which was apparently written before the others, in January. His attention to detail is really wonderful.

. . . We shall go by Lyons, Geneva, and Chambéry, direct to Turin, where I hope to prove to you that I am not the monster you pretend to consider me, heaven knows how unjustly. Before leaving [Mr. Thrale] cannot mean to give me less than a hundred guineas to set my affairs in order ; and the greater part of them, if I get them, shall be for you, my brothers. [Baretti had not been making any remittances to his brothers lately in return for the large sums they had lent him.] In Turin we shall arrange to spend eight or ten days, if I, who am in command of the party, get my way, as I shall. From Turin we shall go down to Casale, if I can only make sure of a moderately good inn or other lodging there. We shall then send the carriage and the four-wheeled chaise to Valenza, as I mean to go down the Po in two boats and disembark at the Islands [where was his brothers' estate] and spend two or three days there, if the chief administrator, Amedeo, will receive us in rustic state, at our own expense, be it understood, not his. But, my dear sir, how can I venture to carry out this plan, if the beds in the house on the Islands are not soft enough for the tender limbs of my Esteruccia ? This you can easily remedy by hiring or buying fine mattresses and sheets, and as I am treasurer, I shall pay handsomely for everything, as also for the hiring of a quantity of silver plate and majolica plates—not

pewter, if you please!—which will be necessary. . . . Do not forget to have a supply of books, either borrowed or hired, so as not to let the house have an illiterate appearance; and they should be old rather than new, Italian, Greek, and Latin. Will your eagle brain grasp this? Have you taken my idea, Amedeo? Come now, to it like a man, and ensure at least a moderate success to these my most earnest wishes. When you do us the honours of the house I shall expect you to assume a character half way between the easy courtier and the country philosopher, and treat my friends with more cordiality than ceremony. We do not care about having French-made dishes at table, but plain, homely food and plenty of it, and our own full-bodied, clear wines, of rich flavour. You need not, any of you, whether men or women, think of dressing yourselves up in gorgeous clothes; only see that they are clean.

Do not forget a country dressing-table for the lady and a block to comb her wigs upon, and a couple of handglasses, one for Madam and the other for her husband. If I remember rightly, you have nine rooms in the house, and there is a bed in each, so that I think you will be able to provide for the whole party, including the servants. I must warn you that even the servants, being English and not altogether vulgar people, must each be supplied with a separate bed, and not put in a corner anyhow, as we usually do with our own wretched menials. [It is obvious that Piedmont was behind the times, or at least behind England, in most of the comforts of life at this period.]

I must now tell you something of the character of these people. Mr. Thrale is a very fine man and obviously a thorough gentleman, who likes simple ease and is never out of humour for a moment. He only speaks a very little French, unlike his wife, who talks French and Italian fluently, without troubling about their quality, and likes to talk them, and is bright and lively. She is, however, shocked at the least offence against religion or morality, for she is very fond of her Bible,¹ and you must be sure there is a Latin Bible among the aforesaid books, as she understands Latin perfectly too. Both husband and wife delight in seeing things agricultural, and the wife is very fond of her chickens. . . . She thoroughly understands the making of cheese and butter, and likes to talk familiarly with the country people, and physies their children when they are ill, etc., etc. As for my Esteruccia, who won't be twelve years old when we are with you, I can only say that she is just like the angels in every way, and I love her seven thousand times more than I ever loved any one else.

In the March letter, already quoted, he says :

I want my dear little Esteruccia to kiss you all three, in spite of her pretty blushes and a retiring shyness, which makes her silent with every one, and familiar and deliciously impertinent with no one but myself. How impatient I am to show you my darling pupil! You must give her flowers and spoil her in a thousand different ways every day."

¹ "Molto Bibbiaia"—one of Baretti's best efforts in word-coining.

Then follows the character of Johnson already quoted (p. 74).

If we can find a priest or a monk [he continues] who speaks Latin with some elegance, we will invite him to dine with us; for we keep open house wherever we go. Then we will leave them to talk about literature together, and not trouble ourselves with his elephantine tricks. If we cannot find any one of the kind, we must provide him with Greek or Latin books, and that will do as well. Besides, I am a very Proteus, and can play any part necessary to vary different people's amusements. If the Marchese Grisella were still there, I know he would show us some civility, because I introduced him to the family when he was here, and they entertained him hospitably. I am writing to him to-day, begging him to request some lady in Casale to be kind to Mrs. Thrale during our short stay there. If the Canonico Irico were there, I would implore him not to leave us a moment, as he would be really precious for Johnson. Have I said everything? I think so. . . . As we mean to see Sicily as well as Italy, I imagine our journey will last nearly a year, after which I hope to be able to come and end my life where I began it, and to end it peacefully, in some quiet country place like the Islands, for instance. I am now weary of the world, and am only tied to it because I cannot free myself from it. From Valenza we shall go by Alessandria to Genoa, and then to Milan, avoiding the direct road, since we do not care whether the roads are crooked or straight,

so long as we see everything and can satisfy our curiosity.

It is difficult to imagine Baretti, of all people, leading a life of country retirement.

This Italian journey was finally prevented by the sudden death of Harry Thrale, which took place on March 23. A servant of Count Mamucci, who happened to be with the Thrales at the time, brought the news to Baretti, who hastened from his lodging in Tichfield Street, Marylebone, to the Borough. There “Mr. Thrale, both his hands in his waistcoat pocket, sat on an armchair in a corner of the room with his body so stiffly erect, and with such a ghastly smile in his face, as was quite horrid to behold.”¹ In fact, he never recovered from this blow, which finally ruined his hopes of having an heir to his business. Meanwhile Mrs. Thrale was going off in a series of fainting fits. Baretti did what he could. Four days later she proposed to go to Bath to escape the funeral, and give Queeney, who was unwell, a change of air. Baretti volunteered to accompany them, as there was no one else available, to try to cheer them, and his offer was gladly accepted. Just as they were starting, Johnson appeared, and seems to have been hurt at not having been asked to go too.²

¹ *Eur. Mag.*, vol. xiii. p. 314.

² Hill’s *Boswell*, iii. 6.

At Bath a serious quarrel occurred. Mrs. Thrale showed Baretti a letter from Dr. (afterwards Sir Richard) Jebb, reprimanding her sharply for playing the physician to her children, and forbidding her to give Queeney any more tin pills, as they were very dangerous. She laughed at the letter, and said that doctors were all fools, expecting Baretti, who was always abusing the faculty, to sympathise. But Queeney was here concerned, and Baretti doubtless preferred a genuine doctor to an amateur. He flew at her, telling her she would send her daughter to join her son, if she were not careful, and urged Queeney not to touch the pills. Mrs. Thrale was naturally angry, but the pills ceased, and peace was afterwards made. Baretti always thought that her enmity towards him dated from that day, and he was possibly right, for Mrs. Thrale loved to dabble in physic, and did not like her pet doses treated with contempt.¹ "Baretti alone," she wrote to Johnson,² "tried to irritate a wound so very deeply inflicted, and he will find few to approve his cruelty." This was the first of the passages that gave Baretti such offence when published.

This abrupt end to the Italian journey, when the chaises had actually been ordered in France,

¹ *Eur. Mag.*, vol. xiii. p. 315.

² *Thrale-Johnson Letters*, i. 319.

was a bitter disappointment to Baretti. On May 10 he wrote to his brothers:

MY DEAR BROTHERS,—

I have allowed two or three weeks to go by after sending you the sad news that I shall not be going south owing to the death of Mr. Thrale's only son. He has now gone on a tour through this island with his wife and daughter in order to find distraction for their grief to some extent. Before starting he gave me a hundred guineas, and there is an end of all the benefits I had expected to reap from him, if we had taken the journey; and here I am no better off than before. Perhaps they will think of going abroad again next year; but each year that passes means another gone, and I grow old apace and the evils of age are overtaking me all too soon. But what is to be done? I shall stay here and work hard at an important undertaking which I began three years ago, and which will require another year's hard work before it is done; and this will bring me in something too, I hope.¹ . . . God will provide, and no one can foresee the future. Meanwhile, I have the consolation of being out of debt, and possessing enough clothes and linen for a long while to come, with more than thirty guineas in my pocket. It is long since I was so flourishing, so I must be contented, and work on without looking ahead and worrying unnecessarily.

Matters were now rapidly coming to a crisis between Baretti and Mrs. Thrale. She seems

¹ This was the Spanish Dictionary.

to have had the power of bringing the very worst that was in him to the surface, and he certainly treated her in a way in which he never ought to have treated a lady in whose house he was living. “I live with him [Mr. Thrale],” he once wrote to his brothers, “like a brother, and scold his wife before his face when I think it necessary, for I regard her more in the light of a daughter.” Mrs. Thrale wrote and complained of Baretti’s conduct to Johnson, and he replied from Ashbourne, on July 15, 1775:

I wish, for my part, that he [Mr. Thrale] may return soon and rescue the fair captives from the tyranny of Baretti. Poor Baretti! Do not quarrel with him; to neglect him a little will be sufficient. He means only to be frank, and manly, and independent, and perhaps, as you say, a little wise. To be frank he thinks is to be cynical, and to be independent is to be rude. Forgive him, dearest lady, the rather, because of his misbehaviour I am afraid he learned part of me.”¹

That is to say, Baretti copied Johnson’s manner of behaving towards Madam, and Baretti was not Johnson. Johnson was, however, the only person who “used to oppose and battle him, but never with his own consent; the moment he was cool, he would always condemn himself for exerting his superiority over a man who was his friend, a

¹ *Thrale-Johnson Letters*, i. 277.

foreigner, and poor"¹; and we find Johnson writing, "When I come we will enter into an alliance, defensive at least,"² against Baretti. But in the next letter he says, "You and Baretti are friends again. My dear mistress has the quality of being easily reconciled and not easily offended."

In his strictures in the *European Magazine* Baretti says that—

one of the points on which my friend [Johnson] and I most widely differed and most frequently disputed, especially during the last seven or eight years of his life, was certainly that of his mistress's excellence, or no excellence ; and every body knows that his mistress, as he emphatically called her, was my pretty Hetty Lynch, alias Mrs. Thrale, alias Mrs. Piozzi.

"With Mr. Thrale," she writes, "I was ever cautious of contending, conscious that a mis-understanding there could never answer, as I have no friend or relation in the world to protect me against the rough treatment of a husband, should he choose to exert his prerogatives." Baretti declares he always gave way to her and never, like Johnson, insisted on the last word ; but he notes³ that "she always contrived to be on the wrong side in every debate," which sounds suspicious.

The whole question is complicated by the indifference of both parties to strict truth ; but if

¹ Hayward's Piozzi, i. 103.

² Thrale-Johnson Letters, i. 283.

³ On Thrale-Johnson Letters, i. 329.

Mrs. Thrale's stories are not much exaggerated, Baretti was seriously to blame, and it is a wonder the arrangement lasted as long as it did. Her account is as follows¹:

Every soul that visited at our house while he was master of it, went away abhorring it; and Mrs. Montagu, grieved to see my weakness so imposed upon, had thoughts of writing me on the subject an anonymous letter, advising me to break with him. Seward, who tried his best to reconcile us, expressed his wonder that we had lived together so long. . . .

Not a servant, not a child, did he leave me any authority over; if I would attempt to correct or dismiss them, there was instant appeal to Mr. Baretti, who was sure always to be against me in every dispute. . . . When I saw Baretti openly urging Mr. Thrale to cut down some little fruit trees my mother had planted and I had begged might stand, I confess I did take an aversion to the creature, and secretly resolved that his stay should not be prolonged by my intreaties whenever his greatness chose to take huff and be gone. As to my eldest daughter, his behaviour was most ungenerous; he was perpetually spurring her to independence, telling her she had more sense and would have a better fortune than her mother, whose admonitions she ought therefore to despise, that she ought to write and receive her own letters *now*, and not to submit to an authority she could not keep up, if she once had the spirit to challenge it.

¹ Hayward's Piozzi, i. 103.

The next story is really more than we could believe, even on more reliable authority. She continues—

that, if I died in a lying-in which happened while he was there, he hoped Mr. Thrale would marry Miss Whitbread, who would be a pretty companion for Hester, and not tyrannical and overbearing like me. Was I not fortunate to see myself once quit of a man like this? who thought his dignity was concerned to set me at defiance, and who was incessantly telling lies to my prejudice?

On the Thrale-Johnson Letters, June 4, 1776, Baretti notes :

On this day I quitted Streatham without taking leave, perfectly tired with the impertinence of the Lady, who took every opportunity to disgust me, unable to pardon the violent efforts I had made at Bath to hinder her from giving tin-pills to Queeney. I had by this time been in a manner one of the family during six years and a half [rather an exaggeration], teaching Queeney Spanish and Italian from morn to night, at her earnest desire originally, and Johnson's, who had made me hope originally that Thrale would at last give me an annuity for my pains; but, never receiving a shilling from him or from her, I grew tired at last, and on some provocation from her, left them abruptly.

The statement that he received nothing is what Miss Reynolds calls “a most mendacious falsehood”; but it is useless to expect strict truth from him. Fanny Burney describes how she was

once teasing Seward, who was very out of temper, at the Thrales', offering him one book after another, trying to force him to praise one. At last she gave him Baretti's "Journey." "Who," cried he, flinging it aside, "can read travels by a fellow who never speaks a word of truth?" Of course, Seward was angry, but the character Baretti bore is manifest.

Mrs. Thrale gives the date as July 6, which is probably correct, as she made the entry at once, and enters in her diary :

This day is made remarkable by the departure of Mr. Baretti, who has, since October 1773, been our almost constant inmate, companion, and, I vainly hoped, friend. On the 11th November, 1773, Mr. Thrale let him have £20, and at our return from France £50 more, besides his clothes and pocket-money ; in return for all this he instructed our eldest daughter—or thought he did—and puffed her about the town for a wit, a genius, a linguist, etc. At the beginning of this year 1776 we proposed visiting Italy under his conduct, but were prevented by an unforeseen and heavy calamity : that Baretti, however, might not be disappointed of money as well as of pleasure, Mr. Thrale presented him with a hundred guineas, which at first calmed his wrath a little, but did not, perhaps, make amends for his vexation ; this I am the more willing to believe, as Dr. Johnson, not being angry too, seemed to grieve him no little, after all our preparations made. . . . Baretti

from that time grew sullen and captious ; he went on as usual notwithstanding, making Streatham his home, carrying on business there, when he thought he had any to do, and teaching his pupil at by-times when he chose so to employ himself ; for he always took his choice of hours, and would often spitefully fix on such as were particularly disagreeable to me, whom he has now not liked a long time, if ever he did. He professed, however, a violent attachment to our eldest daughter ; said if *she* had died instead of her poor brother, he should have destroyed himself, with many a wild expressions of fondness. Within these few days, when my back was turned, he would often be telling her that he would go away and stay a month, with other threats of the same nature ; and she, not being of a caressing or obliging disposition, never, I supposed, soothed his anger or requested his stay.

Of all this, however, I can know nothing but from *her*, who is very reserved, and whose kindness I cannot so confide in, as to be sure she would tell me what passed between them ; and her attachment is probably greater to him than me, whom he has always endeavoured to lessen as much as possible, both in her eyes, and—what was worse—her father's, by telling him how my parts had been overpraised by Johnson, and over-rated by the world. . . . No angry words ever passed between him and me, except perhaps now and then a little spar or so when company was by, in the way of raillery merely.

Yesterday, when Sir Joshua and Fitzmaurice dined here, I addressed myself to him with great particularity of attention, begging his company

for Saturday, as I expected ladies, and said he must come and flirt with them, etc. My daughter in the meantime kept on telling me that Mr. Baretti was grown very old and very cross, would not look at her exercises, but said he would leave this house soon, for it was no better than Pandæmonium. Accordingly the next day he packed up his choke-bag, which he had not done for three years, and sent it to town ; and while we were wondering what he would say about it at breakfast, he was walking to London himself, without taking leave of any one person, except it may be the girl, who owns they had much talk, in the course of which he expressed great aversion to me, and even to her, who, he said, he once thought well of.

Now whether she had ever told the man things that I might have said of him in his absence, by way of provoking him to go, and so rid herself of his tuition—whether he was puffed up with the last hundred guineas and longed to be spending it all' italiano : whether he thought Mr. Thrale would call him back, and he should be better established here than ever ; or whether he really was idiot enough to be angry at my threatening to whip Susan and Sophy for going out of bounds, although *he* had given them leave, for Hetty said that was the first offence he took huff at,¹ I never now shall know, for he never expressed himself as an offended man to me, except one day when he was not shaved at the proper hour forsooth, and then I would not quarrel with him, because nobody was by, and I knew him to be so vile a lyar that I durst not trust

¹ This had greatly offended Baretti, who describes the occurrence in detail in *Eur. Mag.*, vol. xiii. p. 394.

his tongue with a dispute. He is gone, however, loaded with little presents from me, and with a large share of my good opinion, though I must sincerely rejoice at his departure, and hope that we shall never meet more but by chance.

Mrs. Montagu told Mrs. Thrale that Baretti attributed his departure from Streatham to Johnson. This was most ungrateful on his part, as Mrs. Thrale would never have stood him so long but for Johnson, and the statement was probably made out of spite after the quarrel with Johnson.

Baretti left them, fully determined never to see any of them again—

as was the case during nearly four years: nor had she and I ever met again as friends, if she and her husband had not chanced upon me after that lapse of time at the house of a gentleman near Beckenham [Mr. Cator], and coaxed me into a reconciliation, which, as almost all reconciliations prove, was not very sincere on her side or mine; so that there was a total end of it on Mr. Thrale's demise, which happened about three years after.¹

Baretti went away from Thrale's [wrote Johnson on December 21, to Boswell] in some whimsical fit of disgust, or ill-nature, without taking any leave. It is well if he finds in any other place as good an habitation, and as many conveniences. He has got five-and-twenty guineas for translating Reynolds' "Discourses" into Italian, and Mr. Thrale gave him an hundred in the spring, so that he is yet in no difficulties.

¹ *Eur. Mag.*, vol. xiii. p. 395.

CHAPTER XIII

A TIME OF STRUGGLE

1776—1782

BARETTI was not wise in choosing his time for leaving the Thrales. The American War had commenced and entirely monopolised public interest in England. He had already written to his friend Bicetti (May 5, 1776): “The war with the American rebels, which has excited violent party feeling, has thinned the number of my former friends. The English, let me tell you, are born tyrants, and if you do not embrace their own political opinions, they break with you”; and Baretti, who, like Johnson, sided with the mother country, was the last man to state his opinions with moderation.

In a letter to Mrs. Thrale in 1779, Fanny Burney describes a discussion between Baretti and Greville at old Mr. Crisp’s house, at Chessington¹:

But you would have laughed to have seen the little respect he paid the opposition and opinions of the great Mr. Greville, the arrogance with which he “downed” whatever he advanced and the

¹ D’Arblay, Diary, i. 265.

fury with which he answered him when contradicted in his assertions. I really expected every moment to hear him exclaim, “It is that you are an impenetrable blockhead” [Baretti’s favourite term of abuse]; and I could not get out of my head the rage with which Mr. Greville would have heard such a compliment. As it was, the astonishment that seized him when he saw the violence and contempt of Baretti, was sufficiently comical; but when he found Baretti stout, and that the more he resisted the more he bullied him, he could only stare, and look around at us all, with an expression that said, “Am I awake?”

Meanwhile Baretti’s brothers were not prospering, and were blaming him for not repaying them some of the money they had lent him in their better days. They had good grounds for complaint, especially when we remember that, on his own confession, he had gambled away the share he had received from his father. He certainly had no turn for economy, and spent his money freely—too freely, when he had any, usually anticipating his income; and when he had none, he was forced to borrow, or to get advances on work not yet finished. The fact that he required £12 or £14 a month to live at a time when the purchasing power of money was practically double what it is now, while the standard of comfort was much lower, is a sure proof of his extravagance, if any were needed. On February 25, 1776, he had written to his brothers:

I do not mean to say that I am offended by Amedeo's letter of the 8th of last month, adorned with Filippo's charming postscript of the 13th. But because I am determined not to answer insult with insult, it does not follow that I do not mean to oppose reason to unreasonableness. To begin with the unworthy, even vulgar, charge you bring against me with so much energy, of never having sent you money in return for all you have given me, allow me calmly to ask you, how do you know that I was ever in a position to send you any ? "Oh, but you gave some old rags and a guinea to Signor Capitolo one day that he was like to die of hunger, and he told us himself that you did not wish it known." But is to clothe a naked and feed a hungry man an action so monstrous that you can twist it into a pretext for calling me cruel and ungrateful towards you ? And if I tell you that when I gave him that guinea I gave him a good half of my stock at that time, what will you answer ? You will probably put me down as a liar in your charity. You may believe what you like, but I know that from the day I returned from Italy to this country, I have hardly had a guinea in my pocket that did not belong to some creditor, and I ought not to have given Capitolo the one I did give him, had not conscience yielded to pity on that occasion. But why, you will ask, did you not tell us during the last few years that you were in debt ? Why did you not at least complain of your hard lot to us ? Because shame on the one hand and hope on the other prevented me from doing so—I mean, the shame of always receiving and never giving and the hope of being

able to manage without always troubling you. Besides, life is not all tears and lamentations, and time has given me strength patiently to endure poverty without grumbling continually, especially when there is hope. . . . I shall end by telling you, without any superfluous protestations of affection, that when I arrive I shall give you all the money I have, if I have any, of course. This will probably make us friends again on the same footing as before. Otherwise, we must do without each other, for I cannot make the world over again to suit my wishes. A hearty good-bye to you all.

The letter is dignified. It was, of course, written before the journey to Italy was abandoned. The Capitolo here mentioned came to London during Baretti's first visit, when he was expecting his brother Filippo, and was a source of endless trouble to Baretti. He seems to have been a hopeless case, and is often mentioned in the letters home. He had an income of some £80 a year in Piedmont, but refused to return thither, and the money was used for the maintenance of his son. "He has taken an ugly German woman into his house," wrote Baretti,¹ "who will pluck his few remaining feathers from him. His mode of life here is to stay at home and sleep in bed all night and out of bed all day." He soon got badly into debt and was imprisoned. He seems to have been a dear friend of Filippo, who wanted to send money for

¹ To Filippo, December 26, 1769.

his release ; but Baretti points out that this would be money thrown away, unless enough were sent to pay for his journey back ; and even then there was no guarantee that he would leave England.¹ He himself avoided seeing him, for he knew his firmness would melt at the sight of misery, and he would give him money which he could ill afford to lose and which would only be wasted. At last he was released from prison.

Capitolo gets something by making artificial flowers ; and I give him a little money and some old clothes, which he makes look as good as new, from time to time, as well as handkerchiefs and stockings and old shirts. His health is better than yours. Long habit has made him contented with his far from enviable lot. He breakfasts with me once or even twice a month.²

On December 5 in the same year he wrote :

Capitolo came to me a few days ago in such a deplorable state of misery that he drew tears from my eyes, and, what is worse, shillings, which I had no right to give him, from my pocket. Some day he will die of misery and want. I don't think he had eaten for two days when he came, for he could hardly stand and could not satisfy his hunger with tea and bread.

This is the last we hear of him ; but one can imagine his end among the poor wretches who always moved Baretti's sincere pity.

¹ To Filippo, April 24, 1772.

² *Ibid.*, May 8, 1777.

Baretti now set to work with his usual energy.

Do you know that since the beginning of the year I have spent more than thirty nights “de claro en claro,” as they say in Spain, driving my pen at my desk, besides working six or seven hours a day? And why? To finish enlarging and correcting a Spanish dictionary, which will, d.v., be quite ready in three weeks. You cannot imagine the backache, as well as the brain-work, this undertaking has cost me. I have also written something in French in defence of Shakespeare in reply to Voltaire’s letter to the French Academy, and thanks to what I have said there and the venom with which I have said it, I feel confident that I shall greatly increase my reputation throughout Europe, as well as my popularity in this island.¹

This latter was the “Discours sur Shakespeare et sur Monsieur de Voltaire,” in answer to his letter to the French Academy, trying to prevent *Le Tourneur* from publishing a translation of Shakespeare’s works. The “Discours” is vigorous and violent, as one would expect, though somewhat confused, and obviously put together in haste. Baretti shows conclusively that Voltaire did not know English or Italian either, and did not understand Shakespeare; he even suggests that his object in preventing *Le Tourneur*’s version from appearing is the fear that his own blunders in translation will be exposed. He need not be afraid, however. No

¹ To Filippo, May 8, 1777.

one is likely to pay much attention to the translation, for Shakespeare can never be adequately rendered in an exact Latin language or appeal to a nation brought up to Corneille ; and Voltaire seems to think that all that cannot be adequately given in French is necessarily worthless. Voltaire's own attempts at giving specimens of Shakespeare in French blank verse he regards as deliberately meant to make our greatest poet appear ridiculous. Blank verse is absurd in French, and nothing could certainly be much worse than his versions.

Baretti shows a real knowledge and appreciation of Shakespeare. He says that, while he would give a finger to write a tragedy like "Cinna," he would give two to have drawn a character like Caliban. Shakespeare may have a thousand defects more than Voltaire, but each of his beauties is worth a hundred of Voltaire's. As to the question of the unities, it requires no more imagination to follow Shakespeare's rapid changes of scene than to fancy yourself in Persia when you are in Paris. Baretti was probably the first Italian to appreciate and understand Shakespeare. Doubtless Johnson had done much to train his taste to an admiration of Shakespeare, just as he taught him to undervalue Milton ; but his insight is none the less remarkable, and is one more instance of his wonderful power of adopting and understanding the English point of view.

Voltaire's attacks had already called forth a reply from Mrs. Montagu, the chief of the Blues and a recognised champion of the poet; while Lessing, in Germany, had adopted a similar point of view in his "Hamburgische Dramaturgie" as early as 1767.

As for Voltaire's Italian, Baretti had already said, in the "Manners and Customs," that, though the French had written much—

about the Italian language, etc., from Henricus Stephanus to Monsieur de Voltaire inclusively, . . . not one of all those who had handled these subjects was ever lucky enough to be once right, whether in his censure or his praise.

The French is far from perfect, as Baretti himself knew.

I am well aware that there are numerous mistakes in the "Discours," for I was obliged to print it as I wrote it, before the excitement caused by Voltaire's letter to the Academy had cooled down in Paris and London. . . . In it I have uttered a few home truths to the French, the English, and the Italians.¹

He says he felt bound to write in French to be sure of being understood by Voltaire's countrymen.

The King, he tells us, read it and liked it, though he was no admirer of Shakespeare,

¹ To Carcano, August 12, 1778.

according to Fanny Burney. Hannah More wrote to Garrick¹:

I hear Baretti has been civil enough to send me one of his books on Shakespeare, but I have it not here; it is a strange undertaking; slippery ground, I think; an Italian author, to write about our divine English dramatist, and that in the French language.

Garrick tells her that he has also received a copy. "If it is done well, I rejoice; if ill, the cause will be much hurt by a weak defender."²

Baretti was, as usual, over-sanguine as to its success; he appears to have made nothing out of it. He was indignant at the treatment he received in Paris. All the copies have been "emasculated by a clumsy Royal Censor, a thorough Voltairian, who made Durand, the bookseller, reprint a number of pages before allowing it to be published."³ It does not seem to have been well received in Milan, where Voltaire was greatly admired and Shakespeare utterly unknown, in spite of the former's remarks about Italian literature.

Work as he would, Baretti was in real distress, as we see from the following letter⁴:

Four months ago I finished some work to order for a bookseller, for which he gave me fifty

¹ June 16, 1777.

² Hannah More's "Memoirs," i. 116.

³ To Filippo, December 2, 1777.

⁴ To brothers, November 20, 1777.

guineas. Since then I have not succeeded in finding means to earn another penny, so that I am more than thirty pounds in debt. I have to spend twelve or fourteen pounds a month to live meanly, and have the additional anxiety of not having been able to find work for some time. This cursed war does not let the English give a thought to any kind of literature; consequently we numerous writers shall all die of starvation, if it continues. Providence, they tell us, never deserts any one; so I live on in hope and anxiety.

Burgoyne's surrender to Gates came as a great blow to Baretti.

LONDON, *May 5th, 1777.*

MY DEAR AMEDEO,—

The better prospects now before you have helped to some extent to dispel the black clouds that have darkened my thoughts for many months past. Giovanni bids me not to trouble whether Europe becomes American or America European; but Giovanni does not know that this war between America and England has proved my utter ruin, because the printers and booksellers will do no more business either with me or with any of the other numberless authors who live by compiling books. . . . A dozen times or more have negotiations been opened with one bookseller or another, one printer or another, for bringing out my Royal Spanish and English Dictionary, but they have always fallen through; and now that America seems quite lost to England, it would be as useless to try to come to an arrangement as to try to move Olympus. I

am in a worse plight than I ever was in my life before, without money in a country where the price of everything rises daily with the endless growth of taxation. Even sugar, a necessity in this scurvy-stricken country, which cost 4*d.* a pound a fortnight ago, has risen to 7*½d.*, and bread and beer and even coarse meat in proportion. A nice prospect, this, for a man who lives by toiling at his desk and has not earned a farthing for four or five months, after spending the last two years in hard work and want, in a country where a creditor, if he likes, can clap you into prison for £2 ! Things have reached such a point that I don't know which way to turn ; and the bitter thought that I have made all these efforts for so many years, without succeeding in keeping my head above water, and that all my high hopes have vanished into empty air, besides the finding myself old, quite white-headed, fat and out of health, with sight so bad that the strongest convex glasses cannot help it, has made me change my tone for some time past. I have become more irritable and depressed than ever, and feel almost angry at having lived too long.

He would like to return to Italy, but then he would be obliged to work all day long at a paper there. However, if his brothers will send him £150, he gives his word that he will be at Casale with Giovanni within a month. He will write an account of the journey out, and hopes to get a hundred guineas for it to repay them, as numberless worthless accounts of travels in France

have been published in England; and he still hopes that a certain great personage at home will not forget him on his return, after the letters he has written. From this it is clear that Baretti was still attracted by the vision of lucrative appointments at home. But to this appeal his brothers vouchsafed no answer whatever. They were determined not to lend him another penny.

In fact, he was now in very real distress, and if Mr. Cator had not helped him, things would indeed have gone badly with him. This Mr. Cator was a timber-merchant, who had made a large fortune and was M.P. for Ipswich. Baretti had met him at the Thrales', where he was intimate, afterwards acting as one of Thrale's executors. Johnson used to stay with him at Beckenham, and told Boswell there was "much good in his character and much usefulness in his knowledge."¹ He was too much for Fanny Burney's gravity. When a violent quarrel was proceeding at the Thrales' between Johnson and another guest, she says—

he gave his opinion, quite uncalled, upon everything that was said by either party, and that with an importance and pomposity, yet with an emptiness and verbosity, that rendered the whole dispute, when in his hands, nothing more than ridiculous, and prefaced his remarks with, "But what I have to say is this here";

¹ Hill's Boswell, iv. 313.

and a little later—

he talked of the changes from hot to *could* in the climates he had visited ; and he prated so much, yet said so little, and pronounced his words so vulgarly, that I found it impossible to keep my countenance, and was once, when most unfortunately he addressed himself to me, surprised by him on the full grin.¹

Mrs. Thrale once remarked to Johnson that Cator and Wedderburne were very fond of looking at themselves in the glass. Johnson defended them.

They do not surprise me at all by doing so. They see reflected in that glass men who have risen from almost the lowest situations in life, one to enormous riches, the other to everything this world can give—rank, fame, and fortune. They see, likewise, men who have merited their advancement by the exertion and improvement of those talents which God had given them, and I see not why they should avoid the mirror.²

Cator was a good friend to Baretti now, “when the correction of the Press became his revenue, and the hospitality of his friends one of the means of supporting life.”³ Baretti was asked to pay long visits to Beckenham, during one of which he was reconciled to the Thrales, as we have seen, so that we afterwards find him dining frequently with them ; and he continued to be intimate with the

¹ D'Arblay, Diary, i. 500 ff.

² Hayward's Piozzi, i. 296.

³ *Gent. Mag.*, vol. lix. p. 569.

Hornecks. He gives an interesting account of his life in a letter to Count Bujovich of January 24, 1777. He was sitting over the fire with two Italian friends, when a letter arrived from the Count with the news of Baretti's own death after going on a voyage to the Pacific with his two good friends, Banks and Solander, who, like Baretti himself, are in London. These two had, of course, already accompanied Cook on his voyage. Baretti was also reported to have changed his religion ; but he replies, "A handful of wretched monks can say what they please, but I am not so foolish as to change my old wine for other people's new." The letter was received with roars of laughter.

He still begins the day with tea and bread, and works till three. Then he generally dines out, for a bachelor in London needs no cook.

As a rule, I only eat one dish, even though a hundred are set before me, and drink two or three glasses at most, a fact which does me no little credit when you consider the number of years I have already lived among these valiant topers.

He then drinks two or three cups of tea, has a game of cards, and is at home by nine. He never takes supper, but settles down to read or write for two or three hours. It seems hard that a man so moderate, as every one always admits, should have suffered from gout. Probably it was a case of "delicta majorum immeritus lues."

I am always in a good humour, and never complain of anything to any one, not even of the infernal twinges the gout gives me, though these are rare.

One may perhaps be allowed to doubt whether his temper was always so perfect. He never goes to the play, and his one pleasure is to converse with clever men and beautiful women. Nearly every year he takes a trip to Oxford, or Cambridge, or Bath, or to the country house of a friend.

His one regret is that—

I shall probably never see my brothers or my other relations or you or any of my friends at home again, and, above all, a dear child whom I have educated, the daughter of a worthy friend of mine. She married another worthy friend of mine two years ago and started for the East Indies with him at once, taking a large slice of my heart with her.

This was certainly Mrs. Middleton. On one occasion he had borrowed £70 from Cadell, the publisher, with little hope of being able to repay it.

Fortune relieved him, by bringing him an Eastern present from a young lady, who had been one of those he took a pleasure to instruct ; who was just married to Mr. Middleton in Bengal, and transmitted him, among other treasures, a diamond of fine value ; the use he made of it, was to lodge it in Mr. Cadell's hands, till it could be sold, and the debt discharged.¹

¹ *Gent. Mag.*, vol. lix. p. 569.

She certainly showed a generous appreciation of Baretti's affection, and the use he made of her present is eminently characteristic of his honesty. Custodi assumes that the lady in question was Hetty Thrale, but she did not become Lady Keith till nineteen years after Baretti's death.

It is time we said something of Baretti's religion, or rather his want of religion. He was absolutely unreligious, though not irreligious, and was never offensive in his talk, or rarely so. He told Vincent that, though too much of a philosopher to subscribe to any church, he was a friend to church establishment. But he retained the sort of instinctive attachment a man usually feels for the religion in which he was brought up, even when he has ceased to believe in it, unless he has abandoned it for another; and he speaks of being buried in the St. Pancras Cemetery, where the Roman Catholics were then buried in London.

It was almost certainly he who said to Boswell in Italy, "As a man dies like a dog, let him lie like a dog," adding, "I hate mankind, for I think myself one of the best of them, and I know how bad I am." "Sir," said Johnson, on hearing this, "he must be very singular in his opinion, if he thinks himself one of the best of men; for none of his friends think him so."¹

Baretti's ignorance in matters of religion was

¹ Hill's Boswell, ii. 8.

really past belief. He once said to Johnson, “We have in our service a prayer called the *Pater Noster*, which is a very fine composition. I wonder who is the author of it ?”¹ Baretti afterwards complained to Malone that the story as told gave an unfair representation of him ;

he had observed to Dr. Johnson that the petition “Lead us not into temptation” ought rather to be addressed to the tempter of mankind than a benevolent Creator. “Pray, sir,” said Johnson, “do you know who was the author of the Lord’s Prayer ?” Baretti (who did not wish to get into a serious dispute, and who appears to be an Infidel), by way of putting an end to the discussion, only replied, “Oh, sir, you know by *our* religion [Roman Catholic] we are not permitted to read the Scriptures. You can’t therefore expect an answer.”²

Reynolds, on hearing this from Malone, said, “The turn which Baretti now gives to the matter was an after-thought ; for he once said to me myself, ‘There are various opinions about the writer of that prayer ; some give it to St. Augustin, some to St. Chrysostom, etc. What is your opinion ?’ ”³

Mrs. Thrale says she heard him tell Evans (Rector of Southwark) the story of Dives and Lazarus as the subject of a poem he had once

¹ Hill’s Boswell, v. 121.

² Prior’s Malone, p. 399.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 394.

composed in the Milanese dialect, expecting to be complimented for his originality. Evans thought him drunk, “whereas Baretti was, both in eating and drinking, a model of temperance. Had he guessed Evans’s thoughts, the parson’s gown would scarcely have saved him a knouting from the ferocious Italian.”¹

Religious instruction was at a very low ebb in North Italy at that time, even among ecclesiastics, as the following story of what happened to Mrs. Thrale, when she was on her second honeymoon with Piozzi, shows.

“Are you a Calvinist, madam?” said one of the Monsignori. “Certainly *not*,” was the reply. “Do you kneel to receive the Sacrament?” “I do.” “And are not those fellows damned who do receive it standing or sitting?” “I believe *not*,” said I. “Our Blessed Lord did not Himself eat the Passover according to the strict rules of the Mosaical law, which insists on its being eaten *standing*, whereas we know that Jesus Christ reclined on a triclinium, as was the usage of Rome and of the times. Nay, perhaps He was pleased to do so that such disputes should not arise; or if arising, that His example might be appealed to.” “What proof have you of our Saviour’s reclining on a triclinium?” “St. John’s leaning on His breast at supper,” said I. “Oh, that was at common meals, not at the passover.” “Excuse

¹ Hayward’s Piozzi, i. 95.

me, my lord, it was at the *last* solemn supper, which we all commemorate with our best intentions, some one way, some another. *This* method is not yours, neither is it *mine*; let us beware of judging, lest we ourselves be judged.” “Fetch me a Bible, sir,” said Monsignore. “I will bring mine,” said I. “Excuse me now, madam,” replied my antagonist, “we cannot abide but by the Vulgate.” Canonico Palazzi offered to go; I begged him to buy me one at the next bookseller’s three doors off. My victory was complete, and I have the Bible still which won it for me.

No wonder Baretti describes Mrs. Thrale as “molto Bibbiaia,” considering the ignorance in which he had been brought up.

But to return to his life in London, most of the great singers still brought him letters. Pacchierotti —the Burneys’ beloved “Pac”—is mentioned in his correspondence several times; and he wrote to Carcano (August 12, 1778), “Four days ago I met the Abate Piozzi for the first time, a very modest young man, liked by every one here, if I am to believe those who know him better than I do.” This was, of course, Mrs. Thrale’s future husband, who was well known in Milan.

In 1778 Baretti’s translation of Reynolds’s “Discourses” appeared in Italy. It had been entrusted by Baretti to Siries when in London; but he had shamefully allowed it to be altered past

all recognition on his return home, before its publication there. Baretti at once had a violent letter against Siries printed in London, and sent to Italy for free distribution by his friends. In the same year Nourse at last brought out the Spanish Dictionary, which, when revised by Neuman, has, like the better-known Italian one, become the basis of all later dictionaries of the language in England, and is still in use. It was vastly better than any of its predecessors.

Towards the end of this year he began to carry out a plan by which he seriously hoped to make his fortune: this was to have Horace's "Carmen Seculare" set to music and given in London during Lent. Johnson wrote to Mrs. Thrale on November 21:

Baretti has told his musical scheme to Burney, and Burney will *neither grant the question nor deny*. He is of opinion that if it does not fail, it will succeed; but if it does not succeed, he conceives it must fail.

On March 16 Boswell called on Johnson, and—found that the subject under immediate consideration was a translation, yet in manuscript, of the "Carmen Seculare" of Horace, which had this year been set to musick, and performed as a publick entertainment in London, for the joint benefit of Monsieur Philidor and Signor Baretti. When Johnson had done reading, the author asked him bluntly, "if, upon the whole, it was

a good translation?" Johnson, whose regard for truth was uncommonly strict, seemed to be puzzled for a moment what answer to make; as he certainly could not honestly commend the performance, with exquisite address he avoided the question thus, "Sir, I do not say that it may not be made a very good translation."¹

The translation is certainly far from brilliant.

Philidor was a well-known French musician, always in debt and financial difficulties, who lived much in London, where he died in 1795. The performance was given for three evenings in 1779 at Freemasons' Hall, and was revived for an entertainment given by the Knights of the Bath in 1788. "It brought me £150," says Baretti,² "in three nights, and three times as much to Philidor. It would have benefited us both greatly more, if Philidor had not proved a scoundrel," by running away, "merely to rob the performers of seventy or eighty pounds."³ "Baretti's golden dream," wrote Johnson,⁴ "is now but silver. He is of my mind; he says, there is no money for diversions. But we make another onset on Friday, and this is to be the last time this season." According to Vincent,⁵ "the profits arising to Baretti from the performance were not enough to pay for the clothes

¹ Hill's Boswell, iii. 373.

² On Thrale-Johnson Letters, ii. 41.

³ Charlemont MSS., i. 375.

⁴ On Thrale-Johnson Letters, ii. 42.

⁵ *Gent. Mag.*, vol. lix. p. 569.

he got for that occasion." Which is the true story it is impossible to say; it probably lies midway between the two accounts.

After this failure, he proposed to bring out an edition of Tasso, with notes, etc.; but the scheme never came to anything, though some friends of his even began to collect subscriptions.¹

On November 3, 1777, he wrote to Carcano:

A bookseller wanted me to prepare a selection of Italian letters, for which he offered me fifty guineas. I could not let the guineas go, but where was I to find letters enough to fill two small volumes? Those of Bernardo Tasso, Claudio Tolomei, and other Cinquecento gossips are dull collections, telling you nothing of interest. Caro alone has left a few good letters. What was to be done under the circumstances? . . . I have made all of you, my friends, writers of familiar letters.

The volumes appeared two years later. The letters are all by Baretti except the first, some of them having been actually written by him to friends. The others are composed in the names of various people, and treat of every kind of subject. The selection is interesting, but the letters are all in the same style and obviously from the same pen, and they are often vitiated by an affectation which was growing on Baretti

¹ Letter to Lord Charlemont, July 10, 1780; Charlemont MSS., i. 375.

as he advanced in years, even in his own private letters.

In 1780 his brothers broke their three years' silence to tell him that Amedeo was dead.

You need not have troubled to write [he answered], but could have left Paolo to do so instead. I may be poor, but I will never allow either you or any one else to write to me or not, as they think fit. . . . After all, I am a man. This I address especially to Giovanni, for Filippo deigns to make some apology for his silence of nearly three years in his postscript. I have not given any of you cause to treat me so, either in my last or in any of my letters. I have always loved you dearly and thanked you for the presents you have made me, and my chief wish has been to return home to you. Your ignorance of human nature, combined with your excessive love of money, a passion which lays hold of nearly all men as they grow old, has led you to misjudge me altogether; you have treated me like a dog. I am all the more grieved at the news of Amedeo's death, as I have been unable to show him what I really am in my actions; and he judged men more by their actions than by their intentions. . . . I shall say nothing more; it would be superfluous to do so to people who have not written to me for so long. May you keep your health and not follow Amedeo's example, but let me die before you, so that I may be spared a cruel grief. Good-bye.

This was the last letter Baretti ever wrote his

brothers. They did not reply, and they dropped out of his life altogether.

In 1780 the famous Gordon riots occurred in London, and Baretti's contempt for the behaviour of the Londoners knows no bounds.

Call it a time of cowardice [he wrote¹], a dozen gentlemen armed only with cudgels would have saved many places ; but every individual stood terrified and amazed, which would not have been the case in any other country, though in other countries people are not apt to vaunt their national courage as the English perpetually do. Had it not been for the King's vigorous measures, London must have been all burnt to the ground.

This is really unfair. London was shamefully policed at the time—scarcely policed at all ; and every one knows that it is impossible to organise a defensive force capable of dispersing a powerful mob at short notice. The numbers killed and wounded—five hundred at least—when the troops were actually called in, show the serious state of affairs. It is true, however, that had the troops been summoned at once, the trouble could have been nipped in the bud ; and no satisfactory explanation of the Lord Mayor's unwillingness to allow the military to be called out has yet been offered. The capture of Newgate and the destruction of much valuable property can be fairly

¹ On Thrale-Johnson Letters, ii. 145.

put down to this strange hesitation on the part of the city authorities.

It must have been about this time that Baretti compiled a guide to the Royal Academy.

Baretti has printed a catalogue of the monuments and plaster castes [writes Horace Walpole to Mason on May 6, 1781]. He takes occasion to inveigh against Brutus for taking off Cæsar; and the Italian slave will be approved by more than Cæsar.

Mr. Walpole never penned a more characteristic sentence.

As we have said, Baretti was not unfrequently at the Thrales'.

When Thrale found himself worse and worse [he wrote ¹], he thought of going to Italy, and spoke of it incessantly, and would have me with him, and desired me to keep ready; but he had recompensed me so *generously* for attending him to Paris, and I had so much trouble on that journey, that I always put him off when he harped upon that string: besides, Mrs. Thrale would not go because of Piozzi.

Baretti should attend, I think [writes the lady in question ²]. There is no man who has so much of every language, and can manage so well with Johnson,³ is so tidy on the road, so active too to

¹ On Thrale-Johnson Letters, ii. 181. ² Hayward's Piozzi, i. 132.

³ Of Johnson's selfishness she was convinced, and writes that if her husband died by the road, "Johnson will console himself by learning how it is to travel with a corpse."

obtain good accommodations. He is the man in the world, I think, whom I most abhor, and who *hates* and *professes to hate* me the most ; but what does that signifie ? He will be careful of Mr. Thrale and Hester, whom he *does* love—and he won't strangle me, I suppose. Somebody we *must* have. . . . Baretti must be the man, and I will beg it of him as a favour. Oh, the triumph he will have ! and the lyes he will tell !

The doctors were against the idea, and it was finally decided that, if Mr. Thrale persisted, all his friends should surround him in a body and implore him to abandon it. This shows Thrale's obstinacy and the general respect felt for him. Even Johnson could do nothing with him, and his advice only irritated him ; and nothing would induce him to eat in moderation. On Sunday, April 1, Johnson and Baretti dined with him at the house he had recently taken in Queen's Square, and he again referred to the Italian journey.

Sir Richard Jebb paid him a visit a little 'fore dinner time, and seeing some cucumbers on a plate, wanted him not to eat cucumbers, but Thrale laughed at him for his advice, and eat a great plate-full of them, as if to spite him.¹

Mr. Thrale died early in the morning of April 5, 1781, of a stroke of apoplexy.

Johnson, and I, and many others were to dine

¹ On Thrale-Johnson Letters, ii. 110.

with him that day, and in the afternoon some Perses and Bramins were to come to a concert at his house, that had been planned by her and Piozzi. Two hours after his death she ran away with Hetty to Brighton.¹

These Parsees were the latest craze in London. Hannah More was doing her hair for the entertainment, to which she was greatly looking forward, when she heard the sad news. After Thrale's death Baretti's intercourse with the family naturally ceased.

¹ On Thrale-Johnson Letters, ii. 191.

CHAPTER XIV

PENSION AND LAST YEARS

1782—1789

CATOR's efforts on behalf of Baretti at last bore fruit, and by means of strong representations to Lord Hawkesbury he obtained a pension of eighty pounds a year for him. On this and on what he made by his pen he was able to support himself during the part of the year when he was not paying long visits to the country houses of his rich friends.

I beg you to tell my dear friend Biorsi [he wrote to Malacarne on May 8, 1782] that my title of Secretary for Foreign Correspondence to the Academy is no longer an empty one. A short while ago the King deigned to give me a small pension of eighty pounds a year, and I have already drawn the first quarter's instalment. This little sum is enough to set me in easy circumstances, for I can live on little.

He thoroughly appreciated the generosity shown him in England, and writes in a letter, in French, to Madame Malacarne :

Other people also have told me that Turin has developed into a very fine town since my departure. Nevertheless I shall pass my few remaining years in London, since my country has not treated me well enough to make it worth my while to turn my eyes towards her. Turin has better figs and better peaches than England, but they do not give you pensions of eighty pounds a year there as they have given me in England, and, with all due respect to my native land, I prefer pounds sterling to good figs and good peaches.

The pension was well bestowed, especially at a time when so many utterly worthless names were placed upon the pension list. Baretti had worked hard for many years in England, and it would have been a disgraceful thing if he had been allowed to die of starvation in his old age, as would very possibly have been the case but for his friends, for it was a fate that had overtaken better men than Baretti.

The long friendship between Baretti and Johnson was marred by a quarrel only a year before the latter's death, and unfortunately circumstances prevented them from ever being reconciled. It was really wonderful that no serious difference had arisen before, and says much for their mutual forbearance. There must have been squalls, as Baretti admits.

My connection with Dr. Johnson, though quite close and quite familiar during a great number

of years, was nevertheless, like every other intimacy, subject at intervals to the vicissitudes of coincidence and discrepancy in opinion ; not that I ever dreamt of any equality between our powers of pronouncing judgment in ambiguous and questionable cases, but in mere consequence of that untoward cast of mind which often makes this and that and t'other object appear to Mr. Joseph of such a form, of such a size, of such and such a quality, when Mr. Samuel conceives them all to be greatly different, if not the absolute reverse. . . . If there is any kind of rectitude and fidelity in my ideas, I will ever remember, with gratitude as well as with pride, that I owe more of it to him and to his books, than to any other man I ever knew, or any other books I ever studied.¹

Baretti's own account of the quarrel is given in the "Tolondron" (p. 185), in reply to the charges brought against him by John Bowle. As the years went by, Baretti's health prevented him from getting over from Edward Street, Cavendish Square, to see Johnson in Fleet Street more than twice a month, though Johnson often urged "his oldest friend since Garrick's death" to visit him as often as possible.

One day, and, alas ! it was the last time I saw him, I called on him, not without some anxiety, as I had learnt that he had been very ill ; but found him so well as to be in very high spirits, of which he soon made me aware, because, the conversation happening to turn about Otaheite,

¹ *Eur. Mag.*, vol. xiv. p. 89.

he recalled that Omiah had once conquered me at Chess ; a subject on which, whenever chance brought it about, he never failed to rally me most unmercifully, and make himself mighty merry with. This time, more than he had ever done before, he pushed his banter on at such a rate that at last he chafed me, and made me so angry, that, not being able to put a stop to it, I snatched up my hat and stick, and quitted him in a most choleric mood. The skilful translator of Tasso [Dr. Hoole], who was a witness to this ridiculous scene, may tell whether the Doctor's obstreperous merriment deserved approbation or blame.

Finding that Baretti continued to absent himself, he at last sent word through a mutual friend that he would like to see him as soon as possible ; but Baretti was then starting for Sussex, and before his return Johnson was dead.

Baretti's story, however, is unfortunately not an exact account of what happened. Miss Reynolds says their friendship was finally extinguished by a “most mendacious falsehood that he told Johnson of his having beaten Omai at chess both times he played with him at Sir Joshua Reynolds', whereas the very reverse was true.” Miss Reynolds heard the story from Miss Williams, who was present. “Do you think I should be conquered at chess by a savage ?” “I know you were,” says Johnson. Baretti still persisted, and Johnson, who could not let pass

even an exaggeration by his dear mistress, rose from his seat in a violent rage, shouting, “I’ll hear no more.” Baretti took up his hat and fled in a fright,¹ for Johnson’s rages, even in his old age, were no laughing matter. In his prime two enormous dogs had once begun to fight in Beauclerk’s rooms, to the consternation of all present, when Johnson seized one in each hand, separated them, dropped the aggressor quietly out of the window, and put the dog he had attacked outside the door. Miss Williams’s version bears the stamp of truth upon it; but Johnson must have known Baretti’s failing for many years, and, once his anger had cooled, would certainly have been anxious, as he always was, to be reconciled to an old friend.

Omiah, or Omai, as he was usually called, was a native of Ulitea, an island near Tahiti, who had been brought back to England by Captain Cook. He was made much of in London, receiving an allowance from the King, and was generally under the charge of Jem Burney, Fanny Burney’s brother, who had been on the expedition and spoke his language well. Jem afterwards rose to be an admiral, and his wife was the original of Charles Lamb’s Mrs. Battle, of immortal memory.

The behaviour of the young Otaheitean, whom

¹ Hill’s “Johnsonian Miscellanies,” ii. 293.

it would be an abuse of all the meaning annexed to the word to call a savage, was gentle, courteous, easy, and natural ; and showed so much desire to please, and so much willingness to be pleased himself, that he astonished the whole party assembled to receive him.¹

When Omai played at chess [writes Mrs. Thrale²] and at backgammon with Baretti, everybody admired at the savage's good breeding, and at the European's impatient spirit.

Mrs. Thrale at last married Piozzi in 1784, and Baretti's indignation knew no bounds. In his "Manners and Customs" he had spoken contemptuously of the great attention paid to singers in England, and contrasts it with the way in which they were treated in Italy ; and the discovery that a singer had married a lady of quality, one of the richest in England, who, according to her own account, had refused Whitbread, her husband's rival in business, was altogether too much for him. The position was made even more absurd by Mrs. Thrale's absolute lack of an ear for music. The account of her first meeting with her future husband in the *Memoirs of Dr. Burney*, when she imitated his gestures behind his back out of sheer boredom at the music, is well known. It must be confessed that Baretti's views were shared by practically all

¹ *Memoirs of Dr. Burney*, i. 288.

² *Hayward's Piozzi*, i. 317.

her friends. No marriage ever created a greater scandal or gave rise to more squibs and newspaper attacks. Even to-day, when we are more accustomed to strange alliances, the marriage of a lady of Mrs. Thrale's position to an opera-singer would create a considerable stir.

Piozzi had returned to Milan after Thrale's death until he was sent for by Mrs. Thrale.

I am not surprised [writes Baretti to Carcano on March 12, 1784] at Piozzi's not having thought it advisable to give you any account of me, though he could have done so, as we had several talks just when he was hastening his departure. But I have quarrelled with a mad widow, who is in love with him, and the fact of my not speaking too well of her has not made him particularly well-disposed towards me.

When the couple went to Italy for the honeymoon to escape the storm of abuse aroused by the marriage, he wrote :

Piozzi is going to Milan, having left for the South last Saturday, newly provided with a wife. He will try to introduce this wife of his to your Donna Marianna, and to as many other ladies as he can; but if you take my advice, you will keep her a long bow-shot from your door, for a more madly iniquitous woman never breathed.¹

In his later letters to Don Francesco, having heard, in all probability, that the couple were

¹ To Carcano, April 10, 1784.

being well received everywhere, he grows more and more abusive, and even unquotable.

Baretti had by this time made a very important addition to his friends in Francis Barwell, whom he describes in a letter to Don Francesco Carcano, while staying in his country house at Stanstead, in Sussex.

STANSTEAD, IN SUSSEX, 25th June, 1785.

MY DEAR DON FRANCESCO CARCANO,—

As you see by the address, I am no longer in London, which I left three weeks ago to come into the country here, as usual, with my Nabob. What is a Nabob? you will ask. “Nabob” is an Indian word, meaning a native prince. I am not using it in that sense, however, but in another that has been contemptuously given to it here in England, where it means a man who has grown enormously rich in that vast part of the Indies which belongs to the English. Mr. Barwell, who has taken a fancy to me since I made his acquaintance by mere chance three years ago and invites me every year to pass the six months he spends here with him, is one of these Nabobs. It is not surprising that he has an income of £15,000 a year or more, since, during the twenty-three years he was in India, he played a prominent part in the government of the country. Moreover, he was well off before he went there, his father, who was Governor-General of one of the kingdoms for many years, having left him over £70,000 at his death.—Bravo, Baretti! With the acquaintance and favour of such a man, you must

be as rich as Attalus or Crœsus by now!—No, Don Francesco, I have all I need. My pension of £80 is enough for me, and I do not want a Nabob, or any one else, to be a penny the poorer for me. My determination to be satisfied with the little I have is perhaps the chief reason why Mr. Barwell and some other gentlemen, even richer than he, look on me with a kindly eye. They are confident that I am far more eager and ready to refuse pecuniary assistance than to ask for it.

As I am telling you about His Highness, you shall have his whole story. You must know, then, that he came back to his native country five years ago a widower, with only one son; and yesterday evening—precisely yesterday evening—he was married again to a lovely American girl who, after being driven from New England with all her family, had taken refuge in this country, whence she originally came, for some three years past. I have wished for the match for more than a year, and urged it in my conversation, for the girl is a great favourite of mine; and yesterday evening I at last had the great satisfaction of witnessing the marriage and imprinting a hearty kiss on her forehead as I wished her good luck.

Barwell had been a Member of Council in Bengal, with Philip Francis as his colleague, when Warren Hastings was Governor-General, and warmly supported the Governor, who spoke very highly of him. But Francis's judgment of

him is probably nearer the truth. “He will do whatever can be done by bribery and intrigue; he has no other resource.” While a Member of Council he was proved to be receiving £20,000 a year illegally from salt contracts. Francis once won £20,000 off him at whist in a single sitting. He laid out vast sums on Stanstead House, and was a well-known character in his day.

Baretti found life in Sussex very irksome at times.

I get up at a regular hour, am shaved, combed, and powdered. Then comes breakfast, followed by a short walk and a little reading, to prevent myself from being bored; then dinner, and the usual long drinking; then another walk, then tea, then piquet or whist, then supper, after which we go to bed. A very dull life, you will say; and so do I, and I would gladly change it for another, if I could do as I liked; but who can do as he likes in this world? Personally, I never could, because I have never found myself rich enough.

He complains that he feels buried alive.¹ In fact, he had become a true Londoner, and felt almost as out of place in the country as Johnson.

The Gambarelli to whom he is here writing was a man of some ability, who had come to England in the hope of establishing himself there much as Baretti had done, but soon returned

¹ To Agostino Gambarelli, August 24, 1785.

home in disgust. He seems to have been a proud, nervous, sensitive man, ill-fitted to win the success he felt he deserved, and some years later he committed suicide. Baretti wrote him very interesting letters of advice from Stanstead on August 25 and September 10, 1785. He refers to his own dependent position and its disadvantages. None of the people he meets there ever ask him to their houses alone, and clear hints are given him that he is not wanted without Barwell. The position continually galls him ; and it cannot be a pleasant one to the mildest of men, even under the best of circumstances. He does not associate with the people he meets on an equal footing, and finds it impossible to make friends of his own in the country, where there is no one for him to know. But poverty forces him to submit. He can amuse Barwell, who feels confident, however, that—

I shall always behave with the greatest caution in his house ; that I shall never venture to take the wall of any of the fine gentlemen who visit him, however vulgar they may be ; that I shall always make a point of sitting last at his table ; that I shall never enter into a violent dispute with any one, and shall always give way to these gentlemen, be their opinions good or bad. These are the terms prescribed for those who have not enough to lead an independent life—hard terms, if you like, yet what can I do but accept them ?

I have fought the world for so many years and have had so little success that I am tired of it.

There is something pathetic in Baretti's admission of defeat at last, after a lifetime of hard, if often wrong-headed, struggle.

Besides Cator and Barwell, Baretti counted Gawler among his friends, as well as Reynolds, Chambers, Dean Vincent, the Bishop of Lincoln, and many others. Even in his old age he was a welcome guest at many tables and a well-known figure in London.

In Fanny Burney's Diary we find the following entry in 1786 :

Sunday, July 30th.—This morning I received a letter, which, being short and pithy, I will copy :

“ My dear Miss Burney, or Mrs. Burney, as I am told you must now be called—let your old friend Baretti give you joy of what has given him as great and as quick a one as ever he felt in all his days. God bless you, and bless some body I dare not name, Amen. And suppose I add, bless me too—will that do me any harm ? ”¹

This letter was written on her appointment as Keeper of the Robes to Queen Charlotte. She once told the King, to his great amusement, that when “ Evelina ” appeared and had such a wonderful success, and when every one was trying to discover the author, Baretti wagered that it was

¹ D'Arblay, Diary, ii. 408.

written by a man, for no woman could have kept her own counsel. She well remembered his saying to her, when she first saw him after it was known that she was the author, “I see what it is you can do, you little witch—it is, that you can hang us all up for laughing-stocks ; but hear me this one thing—don’t meddle with me. I see what they are, your powers ; but remember, when you provoke an Italian you run a dagger into your own heart !” She half-shuddered at the fearful caution from him, because the dagger was a word of unfortunate recollection after the Haymarket incident. But on further acquaintance he never repeated his threat, and praised Cecilia warmly.¹ Baretti was right in his suspicions. We owe most of our knowledge of his peculiarities to “little Burney’s quick discerning” and keen sense of humour. We can only regret that she did not tell us more.

In 1786 appeared the “Tolondron,” or “blundering fellow,” as Baretti translates the word in his Spanish Dictionary. This is his name for John Bowle, who had published an edition of “Don Quixote” full of the most elementary mistakes in accentuation, etc. These Baretti had corrected as he went along in a copy belonging to some pupils. News of this had reached Bowle, whose one ambition seems to have been to shine as a

¹ D’Arblay, Diary, iv. 20.

Spanish scholar. He was consequently furious, and published an attack on Baretti in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.¹ Baretti replies to the charges in detail, proving conclusively Bowle's ignorance of Spanish and Italian. The book shows Baretti's English at its best. He even treats Bowle fairly, on the whole, and quotes his actual words before criticising them. He is more moderate, and therefore more effective, than usual in controversy. It is hardly possible to discover that the "Tolondron" is the work of a foreigner. The book is far too elaborate for the occasion, and no one but Baretti would ever have written a bulky volume of three hundred and thirty-eight pages to prove an adversary's ignorance of modern languages and answer a short attack in a magazine. Needless to say, it brought him in no money.

In the same year he printed four letters in Italian, in "versi martelliani," for distribution among his friends at home, one of them containing a violent attack on his old enemy Buonafede, of the "Bue Pedagogo," and the Celestine Order as a whole for making him their General. It is eminently suitable that Baretti's last printed works, both in English and Italian, should be controversial. They certainly show no signs of age; his

¹ Vol. Iv. pp. 497 and 608. In this he quotes from Valerius Maximus, "Truculenta facies, violenti spiritus, vox terribilis, ora minis et cruentis imperiis referta," as a description of Baretti.

mind is as vigorous and his satire as keen as they ever had been. Unfortunately, the last use he made of these powers has left a lasting blot upon his reputation which all his well-wishers must deplore; and it is still more to be regretted that the fame of his strictures on Mrs. Thrale in the *European Magazine* has outlasted that of most of his works. Indeed, these are practically the only ones among his English writings that are read at present, owing to the interest Mrs. Thrale's friendship with Johnson has always aroused in all her doings.

Mrs. Piozzi and her husband had returned to England, and she had found little difficulty in resuming and even in improving her old social position. She had settled in a house in Hanover Square, where she gave Monday concerts and other entertainments which had become the fashion. With her old intimates she appears to have avoided a renewal of friendship, keeping them, with few exceptions, at a distance, as they had so strongly disapproved of her marriage; but she had no difficulty in finding new friends. Her anecdotes of Dr. Johnson had appeared while she was abroad, and in 1788 she published two volumes of "Letters to and from the late Samuel Johnson," which were widely read and commented on. "They are such letters," wrote Hannah More, "as ought to have been written, but ought not to have been printed."

Mrs. Thrale carefully omitted the scolding ones, as Baretti points out; and there is reason to suspect her of having altered them in places. From Burke they drew the remark, “How many maggots have crawled out of that great body!”

They contained two passages, already quoted, that gave great offence to Baretti—one accusing him of having “tried to irritate a wound so very deeply inflicted” after Harry’s death¹; the other being the passage expressing the hope that Mr. Thrale would soon rescue the fair captives from his tyranny.² By this time his hatred of Mrs. Thrale had become a blind and unreasoning passion. He does not seem to have realised that it is hardly possible to deal with a lady in the same way as he had dealt with Buonafede or Bowle, however much she may deserve such treatment. He had his grievances. Mrs. Thrale had irritated him past all bearing; he had been disappointed about his pension, and she had married Piozzi. The very fact that there was a grain of truth in her charges increased the irritation. His temper had never been of the best, and had been aggravated by gout and by endless disappointments during a long life of struggle. So he decided to give vent to his feelings in print. Vincent writes that if, instead of his letter to Mrs. Piozzi, he had told his plain, unvarnished tale, he would have con-

¹ Thrale-Johnson Letters, i. 319.

² *Ibid.*, i. 277.

victed that lady of avarice and ingratitude, without incurring the danger of a reply, or exposing his memory to be insulted by her advocates.¹ Unfortunately, he took his own course. Lord Fife met Mrs. Piozzi in the Park on her return from Italy after her second marriage, and told her that the Burneys were her enemies, adding, “Baretti has been making up a libel, . . . and every magazine has refused it entrance, except a new work carried on by the female Burney.”²

It was, of course, tactless and unkind of Mrs. Thrale to publish the passages about Baretti, and few will complain of the opening sentence of the first stricture :

Among the many who have reason to be exasperated on account of these Letters, I will frankly own that I am one ; and as such, am resolved to animadvert on certain passages in them that have proved harsh to my feelings, even though I should run the risque of being disapproved for not treating their editor with any great ceremony, as must be the case in all discussions produced by the necessity of clearing our characters from calumnious assertions. . . . And as to myself, what respect or ceremony do I owe to an Italian singing-master’s wife, who uses my name in print with as much freedom as if it were allied to that of the folks at Brescia, who call her sister, cousin, aunt, and niece ?³

¹ *Gent. Mag.*, vol. lix. p. 470. ² Hayward’s *Piozzi*, ii. 71.

³ *Eur. Mag.*, vol. xiii. p. 313.

It is absurd attempting to justify the attacks, and one can only quote the comment they evoked and echo it. They are most ungentlemanly. Baretti simply used without scruple the information he had obtained about Mrs. Piozzi while in her family in order to blacken her character.

I have just read for the first time [says Miss Seward] the base, ungentlemanlike, unmanly abuse of Mrs. Piozzi by that Italian assassin, Baretti. The whole literary world should unite in publicly reprobating such venomous and foul-mouthed railing.

Mr. Seward [says Fanny Burney¹], with a good-humoured note, sent me the magazine with Baretti's strictures on Mrs. Thrale. Good heavens, how abusive! It can hardly hurt her—it is so palpably meant to do it. I could never have suspected him, with all his violence, of a bitterness of invective so cruel, so ferocious.

Obviously Lord Fife's information about the Burneys was incorrect, though it is true they were her enemies, but only after she had deliberately broken with Fanny, who did her best to keep her friend, though she disapproved of her second marriage.

All these comments are by Mrs. Piozzi's friends, be it observed; but even her enemy Boswell thought he had "clipped rather *rudely*, and gone a great deal *closer* than was necessary." Mrs. Piozzi herself notes in her Diary:

¹ D'Arblay, Diary, iv. 20.

Baretti has been grossly abusive in the *European Magazine* to me: that hurts me but little; what shocks me is that those treacherous Burneys should abet and puff him. He is a most ungrateful, because unprincipled, wretch; but I *am* sorry that anything belonging to Dr. Burney should be so monstrously wicked.¹

Mrs. Thrale’s charges of want of gratitude against Baretti can hardly be taken seriously. A hundred and fifty pounds or so, which meant nothing to a rich man like her husband, was very inadequate compensation for what he had done for them, especially as he had been led to hope for an annuity.

Vincent relates that a friend, possibly himself, whose opinion he had asked after the publication of the first stricture, told Baretti that he had obtained the *idiom* of our language to a sufficient degree of correctness, but he had not acquired the *manner* of our best writers; and the friend added that he would never read a second, if written in the same style. He received the reproof with good humour, but his mind was too far engaged to alter his plan.² One can only wish, for his own sake, that he had taken the advice and published no more.

Baretti was almost certainly concerned in “The Sentimental Mother, a Comedy in five acts. The Legacy of an Old Friend, and his ‘Last

¹ Hayward’s Piozzi, i. 301.

² *Gent. Mag.*, vol. lix. p. 569.

Moral Lesson,' to Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale, now Mrs. Hester Lynch Piozzi." Among the characters are Lady Fantasma Tunskull ("fantasma" being the Italian for "nightmare"), a vain, affected, intriguing woman, who is in love with every man that comes near the house, and tries to cheat her own daughters out of their dowries with the assistance of Signor Squalici, their singing-master and her chief favourite, whom she supplies with funds. Even her daughters' lovers are not safe from her. She announces that she likes the men when they are in liquor and there is some warmth about them. The love-making is of the most realistic. Her husband, Timothy Tunskull, is a good-natured kind of man, who thinks of nothing but eating and sleeping; but their daughter, Caroline, is a paragon. Squalici acts as a general spy for his mistress. In fact, one recognises at once the Thrale family, as seen through Baretti's spectacles, and the play reiterates most of the charges he had already brought against Mrs. Piozzi.

In order to vent his spite still further upon his enemy, he wrote the marginal notes in his own copy of the Thrale-Johnson Letters, which is now in the British Museum and upon which I have drawn freely.¹ They are rich in interesting information; but the abuse of Mrs. Thrale is far

¹ Most of these have been given by Dr. Hill in his edition of Johnson's Letters, and I have to thank the Delegates of the Clarendon Press for allowing me to use them.

coarser than in the strictures. However, the age was coarse and they were never intended for publication, so there is some excuse for their tone, which must have resembled his own private conversation on the subject.

The winter of 1788-9 was an unusually severe one, with six weeks of hard frost. The Thames was frozen over and a fair held upon it. On April 5, 1789, Baretti dined at Mr. Courtenay's with Malone, who says he was in remarkably good health—indeed, except for the gout, he had an iron constitution—and very entertaining. Much of the roughness for which he was formerly distinguished had worn off with years. He told a number of good stories of Johnson and of his own life, most of which have been given in their place, and the following one of Cuzzoni among them :

When Cuzzoni was somewhat in the decline of her reputation on her second visit here, Baretti went with a friend to see her. She was leaning pensively on her arm ; on which Baretti's friend asked her how she came to be in such low spirits. "How can I be otherwise," said Cuzzoni, "when I have had no dinner, and have not a shilling to buy one?" "Well," said the other, "I am not very rich ; I have but two guineas in my purse ; here is one of them, and let us hear no more of your low spirits. You can now dine as soon as you will." Cuzzoni rang the bell, gave her servant

the guinea, and bade him go to a famous wine-merchant, and get from him a pint of cape [*sic*] wine and a penny roll. The man after some time returned and said the merchant would not let him have the roll and that he was not a baker, but had sent the wine. “Get you gone,” said Cuzzoni. “Unless he sends me a roll, I’ll have no wine.” “Well,” said the wine-merchant on the boy’s return, “since she insists on it, there is a penny; go to the next baker’s and buy her a roll.” On getting her bread and wine she poured the cape (which cost a guinea) into a bowl, and crumbling the bread into it, drank off the contents. Not many years afterwards Baretti saw her *selling greens* at a stall in Bologna.¹

Another good story is also told of her. Handel had composed “*Falsa imagine*” for her to sing in “*Otho*”; but she refused to sing it. At last Handel threatened to throw her out of the window, saying that “he always knew she was a *very devil*, but that he should now let her know, in her turn, that he was Beelzebub, the Prince of Devils,” and he seized her by the waist and lifted the sash. Cuzzoni consented in her terror, and her exquisite rendering of the song greatly increased her reputation.²

This is the last we hear of Baretti till he was seized with a fatal attack of gout in the stomach early in May. His pension was now three quarters

¹ Prior’s Malone, p. 390.

² *Ibid.*

in arrear, and Cator and Gawler had assisted him—not Barwell, one observes—but he was fretting none the less. The family with which he lived, where he was regarded rather as a friend or parent, thought he was sinking more from worry than from disease. He had told Malone that he had recently improved and revised his Italian Dictionary, reducing it from two volumes to one, a course of which the booksellers did not altogether approve. He was to have £100 for his labour, and as he was pressed for money, he wanted it at once from Cadell and Robinson. The request was refused. Words passed between Robinson and himself, and excited him so as to prey upon his mind and hasten his end. Cadell at last agreed to send £50, but Baretti said it was then too late, as indeed proved to be the case, for the money only arrived the day after his death.¹

Not till the day before he died did Baretti allow the vultures, as he called the doctors, to be summoned. He had made himself worse by freely using ice and drinking cold water, which he took as a cure for his dizziness; and he admitted that these remedies had probably hastened his end. He expressed his concern for the contempt with which he habitually spoke of the faculty, and hoped it would not induce younger men to neglect medical assistance.

¹ Prior's Malone, p. 391.

On the barber coming to shave him on the day of his death, he desired he would come on the next day, when he should be able to undergo the operation. He took leave, about four o'clock, with the greatest clearfulness, calmness, and composure of Dr. Vincent, Mr. Milbanke, Mr. Turner, and Mr. Collins, and expressed an earnest wish to see Mr. Cator. On their leaving the room, he desired the door to be shut, that he might not be distressed by the women, who would perhaps be frightened to see him die. He expired about a quarter before 8 on May 5th, 1789, without a struggle or a sigh, the moment after taking a glass of wine. He possessed his faculties to the last moment. He was buried on the 9th of May in the new burying ground, Marylebone, followed by Dr. Vincent, Sir William Chambers, John Milbanke, Esq., Mr. Wilton, and Mr. Richards.¹

Mr. Wilton was doubtless the “Statuary” who lived opposite him for many years.

The new burying-ground is apparently the one now known as the Paddington Street, Baker Street, Cemetery, which has since been turned into a public playground, so that it is no longer possible to identify Baretti’s grave. His burial is entered in the Marylebone register for May 9, 1789, only the name “Mark Anthony Joseph Baretti” being given, according to the custom of the time. It is interesting to find the Christian names entered in English. Here we may note that, though most

¹ *Eur. Mag.*, vol. xvi. p. 93.

of the biographies give Giuseppe as his first name—probably because it was the one by which he preferred to be called—both his baptismal and his burial certificates place Marcantonio first; and this was doubtless the correct order. There is a monument to him in St. Marylebone Old Church, with a medallion portrait by Thomas Banks, R.A., a prominent sculptor of the day, and the following inscription :

Near this place are deposited the remains of Signor Giuseppe Baretti, a native of Piedmont in Italy, Secretary for Foreign Correspondence to the Royal Academy of Arts in London; author of several esteemed works in his own and the languages of France and of England.

Malone says that he gave particular instructions to prevent his body falling into the hands of the surgeons. The £50 from Cadell was enough to pay his debts. His executors, Vincent and Fendall, destroyed all his papers, among them some letters from Johnson. There is said to have existed a commonplace book of his containing copies of these letters, and of some original verses by Johnson.¹ Whether this was also destroyed or whether it has since disappeared, it is impossible to say. Not many of Baretti's English letters seem to have been preserved; indeed, he appears to have been a far more negligent correspondent in our tongue

¹ *Notes and Queries*, 2nd series, vi. 187.

than in his own, and his letters to his English friends can never have been as interesting to them as those to his brothers and his Italian friends must have been, and were probably, therefore, not as a rule kept by them.

Baretti is dead [wrote Mrs. Piozzi in the “*Thraliana*,” May 8, 1789¹]. Poor Baretti! I am sincerely sorry for him, and as Zanga says, “If I lament thee, sure thy worth was great.” He was a manly character, at worst, and died, as he lived, less like a Christian than a philosopher, refusing all spiritual or corporeal assistance, both which he considered useless to him, and perhaps they were so. He paid his debts, called in some single acquaintance, told him he was dying, and drove away that *Panada* conversation which friends think proper to administer at sick-bedsides with becoming steadiness, bid him write his brothers word that he was dead, and gently desired a woman who waited to leave him quite alone. No interested attendants watching for ill-deserved legacies, no harpy relatives clung round the couch of Baretti. He died!

And art thou dead? So is my enmity:
I war not with the dead.

Baretti’s papers—manuscripts, I mean—have been all burnt by his executors, they tell me. So great was his character as a mischief-maker, that Vincent and Fendall saw no nearer way to safety than that hasty and compendious one. Many people think ‘tis a good thing for me, but as I never trusted the man, I see little harm he could have done me.

¹ Hayward’s Piozzi, i. 315.

She sent the following account of him to the *World*¹:

MR. CONDUCTOR,—

Let not the death of Baretti pass unnoticed by the world, seeing that Baretti was a wit, if not a scholar; and had lived for five-and-thirty years at least in a foreign country, whose language he so made himself completely master of, that he could satyrise its inhabitants in their own tongue, better than they knew how to defend themselves; and often pleased, without ever praising man or woman in book or conversation. Long supported by the private bounty of friends, he rather delighted to insult than flatter; he at length obtained competence from a public he esteemed not; and died, refusing that assistance he considered as useless—leaving no debts (but those of gratitude) undischarged; and expressing neither regret of the past, nor fear of the future, I believe. Strong in his prejudices, haughty and independent in his spirit, cruel in his anger,—even when unprovoked; vindictive to excess, if he through misconception supposed himself even slightly injured, pertinacious in his attacks, invincible in his aversions: the description of Menelaus in Homer's "Iliad" as rendered by Pope exactly suits the character of Baretti:

So burns the vengeful hornet, soul all o'er,
Repuls'd in vain, and thirsty still for gore;
Bold son of air and heat, on angry wings,
Untamed, untired, he turns, attacks, and stings.

¹ Hayward's Piozzi, i. 317.

When this appeared in the *World* two days later, she complains that she hardly recognised it, so changed was it: even the quotation was altered. Mrs. Thrale was as good-natured and forgiving a woman as ever lived, but the malice in her description shows how deeply rooted her hatred of Baretti was. She never really pardoned him, and it would have been strange if she had. She naturally saw only the good in the people round her, and the author of “Piozziana” says that he never heard a word of vituperation from her lips of any person who was the subject of discussion, except once when Baretti’s name was mentioned. Of him she said that he was “a bad man”; but would not go into details.¹

On hearing the news, Lord Charlemont wrote to Malone²:

Poor Baretti! He was an honest, a good, and ingenious man, and as a long intimacy had subsisted between him and me, I cannot but be seriously concerned for his death. I had known him well in Italy, but we did not come to England together, neither can I ascertain the year of his arrival. I saw him when I was last in London, and he was in perfect health and spirits.

Dr. Vincent, Dean of Westminster, who had known him during the last seventeen years of his

¹ “Piozziana,” p. 3.

² Dublin, July 12, 1789. Charlemont MSS., ii. 104.

life, wrote the account of him for the *Gentleman's Magazine*.¹

His spirit and moderation was such [he writes] that he was under pecuniary obligation to very few of his acquaintance, that he sought the assistance of none by servility, and, when he received it, was in the absolute distress which his friends could not fail to discover, and which they were ever more ready to afford than he to accept. . . . His talents were neither great or splendid; but his knowledge of mankind was extensive; and his acquaintance with books in all the modern languages which are valuable, except the German, was universal; his conduct in every family where he became an inmate, was correct and irreproachable; neither prying, nor inquisitive, nor intermeddling, but affable to the inferiors and conciliatory to the principals [an opinion which Mrs. Thrale would hardly have endorsed]; in others, which he visited only, he was neither intrusive, nor unwelcome; ever ready to accept an invitation when it was cordial, and never seeking it where it was cold or affected.

On the same page² appears a very different account, obviously by an enemy, and probably by a friend of Mrs. Piozzi, whose description it much resembles.

Mrs. Piozzi has reason to rejoice in the death of Mr. B., for he had a very long memory, and malice enough to relate all he knew. That he was a wit and a scholar is acknowledged by nations

¹ Vol. lix. p. 469, and p. 569.

² *Gent. Mag.*, vol. lix. p. 469.

not his own. Thirty-five years he lived in a foreign country, in whose language he was such a master, that he would wield it in attack on its inhabitants better than they could in their defence. Often pleasing, yet never praising anyone in book, or conversation. Long supported by the private bounty of friends, he delighted rather to insult than to flatter. He at length obtained a competence from a public which he detested, and died in the refusal of that aid which he deemed useless.

The *European Magazine* also contains some anecdotes of him by Isaac Reed.¹

As to his character, the judgment passed upon it in England has been unduly influenced by his attacks on Mrs. Thrale. The strictures are not defensible, but the charge of ingratitude in this case is absurd. The method he chose for venting his indignation put him in the wrong, but he had good cause for his resentment. If his faults were many, so were his friends, though their ranks were continually thinned owing to his combative disposition; and even his enemies admitted his virtues.

Baretti has not suffered the usual fate of those who abandon their own country for another. He has neither been forgotten in Italy nor was he neglected in England. During his lifetime he was treated generously in the land of his adoption—far

¹ *Eur. Mag.*, vol. xv. p. 440, vol. xvi. pp. 91, 240.

more generously than many men of greater parts—while he was neglected in the land of his birth; but since his death, the reverse has been the case. In England he has been almost entirely forgotten—though he loved to describe himself as “a kind of demi-Englishman”—except as a very minor character in the fascinating group that centred round Johnson and the Thrales. This neglect is natural, for his dictionaries are the only books of his now in use, though the “Journey from London to Genoa” and the “Manners and Customs” are still eminently readable. He himself said that his writings were done out of necessity rather than choice, so that whatever he scribbled was always done in a most confounded hurry; “and it is a miracle greater, I think, than St. Anthony ever made, how I came to get bread and cheese, and now and then a beef-steak, by my ill-chopt performances.” He expresses a wish that every page he had sent to the press in Italy or in England was at the bottom of the sea.

But in his own country his fate has been very different. Vincent undoubtedly underestimates his abilities, for he had only his English works to judge from. The *Frusta Letteraria* made an epoch in criticism and, with his account of his travels, has won him an assured position in Italian literature. The independence of his views and the soundness of his methods, as well as his

vivid powers of description, have been fully recognised. All the circumstances of his life in Italy have been carefully investigated and his writings widely commented on. In 1870 a Critical Society was founded in Florence and named after him, and a paper entitled “*Il Baretti*” has been published. He tells Carcano in a letter of August 12, 1778, that he did not write for the present, but for the future, in the hope, perhaps foolish, that it would not be quite as corrupt as the present; and the recognition which he has since obtained proves that he did not hope in vain.

APPENDIX

BARETTI'S FRENCH TRANSLATION OF RASSELAS

“BARETTI,” says Malone,¹ “made a translation of Rasselas into French. He never, however, could satisfy himself with the translation of the first sentence, which is uncommonly lofty. Mentioning this to Johnson, the latter said, after thinking two or three minutes, ‘Well, take up the pen, and if you can understand my pronunciation, I will see what I can do.’ He then dictated the sentence to the translator, which proved admirable, and was immediately adopted”; and Baretti tells us that “Johnson never wrote to me French, but when he translated for me the first paragraph of Rasselas.”

He writes to his brother Filippo on June 23, 1769: “I do not know whether I wrote to tell you that I should like to have my French translation of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia, which I left in Casale. Send it me, if you have an opportunity.” It was never sent, however, and has remained in Casale ever since Baretti left it there, probably in the year 1766. It is now in the possession of the Avvocato Ferdinando Caire, to whose kindness I am indebted for the following particulars.² The eighty-three pages are in Baretti’s handwriting. On the last of them Gaspare Gozzi, then a Licenser of the Press, has written: “Adi 23 marzo 1764 | Niente contro Principi, ne buoni costumi. Gaspare Gozzi, P^o R^o.” On the cover: “To Mr. Baretti | Secretary to the Royal Academy | at the Prince of Orange Coffee House | in the Hay-Market | London. Raccomandata alla cortesia del Sig. Conte | Scarnafiggi Imbasciatore di S. M. appresso | il Re d’Inghilterra | Mr. Baretti | At Mr. Giardini’s | in Little-

¹ Prior’s Malone, p. 161.

² Cp. Piccioni, “*Studi e ricerche*,” pp. 468-9.

Queen-Ann-Street | near Portland-Chapel | facing Mr. Wilton the Statuary." On the back are the following lines, strangely inappropriate, even from a moderate man like Baretti :

Buveurs, quelle est l'erreur votre !
 Vous vous figurez qu'il est beau
 De tenir plus de vin qu'un autre,
 C'est la qualité du tonneau.

The first line should probably run,

Buveurs, quelle erreur est la vôtre !

Rasselas begins :

Ye who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope ; who expect that age will perform the promise of youth and that the deficiencies of the present day will be supplied by the morrow ; attend to the history of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia.

Thanks to Signor Caire, I am able to give Johnson's version, which is as follows, and is certainly admirable :

Mortels ! vous qui prêtez l'oreille à la douce voix d'une imagination séduisante et qui poursuivez vivement les fantômes de l'espoir : vous qui attendez de l'automne de la vie l'accomplissement des promesses, que son printemps vous a faites, et qui croyez, que le lendemain vous donnera ce qui vous manque aujourd'hui, écoutez l'histoire de Rasselas, prince d'Abissinia.

As to Johnson's French, the letter printed by Mrs. Thrale, in French, to Miss Flint, "a very young lady, who had translated his strictures at the end of Shakespeare's plays," is full of blunders, which Baretti corrected in the margin of his copy, with the comment that "the Editor might have saved us this poor French, if she was not able to mend it."

It seems strange that Baretti's translation is in French, not in Italian. Probably he thought that he might make something by a French version, whereas an Italian one would have brought him nothing. An Italian version soon appeared, however, "and a d—d bad one it is," says Baretti,¹ "by a foolish fellow who called himself Cavalier Mei. I saw him a beggar at Padua. He neither knew English, nor Italian, though a Tuscan by birth."

¹ On the Thrale-Johnson Letters, i. 203.

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For a full bibliography, see Piccioni's "Saggio di bibliografia Barettiana," in his "Di Giuseppe Baretti—I primi anni," etc., and also the list of books at the end of his "Studi e ricerche." They are naturally rather defective on the English side.

1. Stanze di Giuseppe Baretti Torinese al Padre Serafino Bianchi da Novara M. O. R. che fa il quaresimale di quest'anno 1744 in Cuneo. Cuneo, per Secondo Antonio Brocca.
2. Lettera ad un amico di Milano sopra un certo fatto del Dottor Biagio Schiavo da Este. [Lugano :] September 1747.
3. Tragedie di Pier Cornelio tradotte in versi italiani con l'originale a fronte. Venice : G. Bertella, 1747-8.
4. Primo ciclameto sopra le cinque lettere di Sig. Giuseppe Bartoli intorno al libro che avrà per titolo "La vera spiegazione del dittico quiriniano." Milan, 1750.
5. Fetonte sulle rive del Po: componimento drammatico per le nozze delle AA. RR. di Vittorio Amedeo Duca di Savoia e di Maria Antonia Ferdinanda Infante di Spagna, etc. Turin : P. G. Zappata, 1750.
6. Le piacevoli poesie. Turin, 1750.
7. Remarks on the Italian Language and Writers. In a letter from *M. Joseph Baretti* to an *English* gentleman at *Turin*, written in the year 1751. London, 1753. (Printed with "Observations on the Greek and Roman Classics.")
8. Li tre libri de' rimedi dell'amore d'Ovidio volgarizzati: in the "Raccolta di tutti gli antichi poeti Latini colla loro versione nell' italiana favella." Milan : Regio Ducal Palazzo, 1752, vol. xxix.

9. *Projet pour avoir un opéra italien à Londres dans un goût tout nouveau.* London, 1753.
10. *La voix de la Discorde, ou la bataille des vidons, etc.* London, 1753. Written in French and English.
(Both these were known to Custodi, but have since disappeared.)
11. A *Dissertation upon the Italian Poetry, in which are interspersed some remarks on Mr. Voltaire's Essay on the Epic Poets.* London: printed for R. Dodsley at Tully's Head, Pall Mall, 1753.
(Piccioni classes this as a lost work, but there is a copy in the British Museum.)
12. The Italian version, printed on the opposite page, of
“*An Account of an Attempt to ascertain the Longitude at Sea, by an exact Theory of the Variation of the Magnetical Needle,*” etc. Johnson's account of Zachariah Williams's theory. London: Dodsley, 1755.
13. *Degli Amori d'Ovidio volgarizzati, in the “Raccolta,”* etc. Vol. xxx., 1754.
14. *An Introduction to the Italian Language.* London, 1757.
15. *The Italian Library, containing an account of the lives and works of the most valuable authors of Italy, with a Preface, exhibiting the changes of the Tuscan language from the barbarous ages to the present time.* London: Millar, 1757.
16. *A Dictionary of the English and Italian Languages.* 2 vols., London, 1760.
17. *A Grammar of the Italian Language, to which is added an English Grammar for the use of Italians.* London, 1762. (Reprinted from the Dictionary.)
18. *Lettere familiari ai suoi tre fratelli Filippo, Giovanni, e Amedeo.* Vol. i., Milan: Malatesta, 1762; vol. ii., Venice: Pasquali, 1763.
19. *La frusta letteraria di Aristarco Scannabue.* Roveredo (Venice), 1763–5; Trento (Ancona), 1765.
20. *An Account of the Manners and Customs of Italy, with observations on the mistakes of some travellers with regard to that country.* London: Davies, 1768.

To the second edition (1769) was added an Appendix in answer to Mr. Sharp's Reply.

21. A Journey from London to Genoa, through England, Portugal, Spain, and France. London: Davies, 1770.
22. Proposals for printing the Life of Friar Gerund. 1771. Baretti never printed it, but an English translation by Dr. Warner appeared later.
23. An Introduction to the most useful European Languages, consisting of select passages from the most celebrated English, French, Italian, and Spanish authors; with translations. London, 1772.
24. Tutte le opere di Niccolò Macchiavelli. London, 1772.
25. Preface in Italian to an edition of Metastasio, published by Durand in Paris in 1773.
26. Easy Phraseology for the Use of Young Ladies who intend to learn the Colloquial Part of the Italian Language. London: Robinson & Cadell, 1775.
27. Discours sur Shakespeare et sur Monsieur de Voltaire. London: Nourse, 1777.
28. The Carmen Seculare of Horace (English translation). London, 1777.
29. A Dictionary, Spanish and English, and English and Spanish. London: Nourse, 1778.
30. Delle Arti del disegno, discorsi del Cav. Giosuè Reynolds, Presidente della R. Accademia di Londra, etc., trasportati dall' inglese in italiano. Leghorn, with the imprint of Florence, 1778.
31. Scelta di lettere familiari fatta per uso degli studiosi di lingua italiana. 1779.
32. An Introduction to the Carmen Seculare of Horace. (For distribution among the audience at the musical performances.) London, 1779.
33. A Guide through the Royal Academy. London: printed by T. Cadell (circ. 1780).
34. Dissertacion Epistolar acerca unas obras de la Real Academia Española. Al Señor Don Juan C——. London, 1784.
(This had disappeared even before Custodi's day.)
35. Tolondron: Speeches to John Bowle about his edition

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36. Quattro epistole, in versi martelliani [London, 1787].

37. Strictures on Signora Piozzi's publication of Dr. Johnson's Letters, in the *European Magazine*. London, 1788: xiii. 313, 393; xiv. 89.

38. Numerous occasional poems in Italian, especially between 1741-47.

39. A large number of letters to his brothers and various Italian friends. Piccioni gives a Chronological Index of all those known or published, with references to the places where they are to be found, in his "Studi e ricerche," pp. 563-82.

IN MANUSCRIPT

40. An Italian translation of Rasselas, unpublished, in the possession of Signor Caire, probably made in 1759-60.

41. The manuscript notes written in the margin of his copy of the Thrale-Johnson letters, now in the British Museum. It formerly belonged to George Daniel. The notes were written in the last year of Baretti's life. Most of them have been printed by Dr. Hill in his edition of Johnson's letters.

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